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Signet SPRING 1970

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CATHIE HENSON

UNCLE HENRY'S

Yes, indeed. It was a fine display! The drive-in beckoned tastefully to cars whipping through the rural North Carolina tourist area, and my weakness for businesses with class made me a victim, too. Yes, I said to myself, the owner here surely knows his way around in the advertising world: The highway sign which exclaimed, "Uncle Henry's Drive-In. Eats and Live Entertainment Daily. Big Dance Every Fri. Nite" was a definite business stimulant. Strings of red, yellow, and blue plastic flags—the flashy yet durable kind that frame car lots and gas stations—flirted noisily in the breeze.

Amid all the color stood a sound wood-and-cinder block hut with a low, screened window and shelf for receiving food orders. This room was adjoined by a long open-air porch, draped with tapestry-like beach towels depicting lush forest and deer scenes. Beneath the elegant hangings, a table exhibited lovely Indian relics —costumed dolls of realistic brown plastic, miniature beaded moccasins, feathered tomahawks, strong bullwhips, thick leather belts, gaudy headdresses and necklaces—all costly, due to their claimed antiquity. This porch also served as the stage, and Lois' and Henry's stools and electric guitars were set up at the end. A cone-shaped speaker directed its mouth from the wires on stage to a wide platform in front, where a prominent trash can stated, "Contributions excepted."

Facing this stage, I parked my car evenly with the other drivers. The guests, opening their doors to draw a breeze through the heated cars, relaxedly displayed their families. The women, mostly pregnant, eased their swollen feet from sandals and dangled pale legs out the car sides. Hulky men in sleeveless undershirts rested tattoed arms with probably golfers' tans on the window ledges. Herds of very young children, barefoot and adorable in sagging diapers, were allowed to straggle about the cars. Grandparents headed for Henry's comfort station. Quite impressed with the appearance of the place, I inquired of the neighboring carload as to its development.

In the beginning, it seems, Uncle Henry himself had promised, "When I git set up, they's gonna be something fer ever-one. A sorta fam'ly type innertainment center —fer young 'n' old alike." To be sure, the place had a little bit of everything. A blurred sign painted to the excellent facilities—"Free Picnic Tables in Back," and the

marvelous cuisine blared from a blown-up menu upon the wall of the sanitation grade "A" kitchen. The entertainment was superb. Besides Henry's variety show with his wife Lois' guitar playing, I was delighted to see that anyone could buck dance on the specially erected platform, labeled with a cute cardboard-and-crayon sign, "Dance at your own Risk! ! !". Mostly local folk clogged there, I learned, and that day was no exception: It was certainly thrilling to see the entire Goode family —all six of them—sharing their talents on the floor. When the record stuck halfway through, the audience pressed their horns and whistled in appreciation. (Henry's crowd always did recognize talent when they saw it).

"Well, shoot! I guess that signifies it's time fer me to pick up," Henry interrupted. "But first—hang on, Lois,—that reminds me of the one about the Gulf Station 'ttendant. Yawl heard it?"

No one beeped, so he went on, "Fella stopped in to the station and had to go t' the bathroom awful bad—kuh, huh! Well, the 'ttendant give him the key, and he runs—sorta stiffly, y'know—on around t' the back. Well, he's runnin' so intent that he don't see this clothesline strung acrosst, and whatta y'know but he gits caught smack in it 'n' all wrapped around." Uncle Henry paused, giggled at his jest, and took a deep breath to begin again. Sniggers floated from the packed cars.

"Well, he comes on back a little later t' give up the key, 'n' the 'ttendant's grinnin'. "Oh, yeah,' he says. 'I fergot t' warn ya about that clothesline back yonder.' Well, well, the fella says—(Yawl are gonna love this'n —whoa! Gotta calm m'self down.) Well, the fella, he says (Kuh, huh, huh!): 'That's okay. I wouldn't of made it no way'!"

We were all wild, of course, with laughter, as Uncle Henry, vital part of the human comedy, finished his joke that day and wiped his eyes while the car horn guffaws faded.

Henry had, in fact, tremendous reputation as an American Wit. Even Junior Umfleet, a regular at the drive-in and evidently the only one in town who had ever traveled outside the state, said the Uncle and his place were without a doubt one of the greatest things to happen to our country. Henry, Junior swears, can truly reach today's generation. After having seen for myself, I wholeheartedly second that claim. I've concluded that the very reason he can level with our changed society is his particular wit—owing its appeal to sex. His humor, fortunately, does not deal with the drier issues such as politics, which don't reach all the people today. As Uncle Henry once attested, "Mine is the only real important kind . . . with meat in it that ever'body can sink their teeth in." And granted, it is one way to speak to the population today.

"Lois, you ready? We got a purty little number to do fer yawl. I think yer gonna like it. Awwwright." The two nodded then and revived exquisitely an old Hank Williams favorite. The very tune they sounded that day proved in its overwhelming esthetic appeal the quality of Henry's musical genius. For what people does beautiful music not possess unlimited appeal? You see, here again he communicates with all generations. Why, the whole country realizes that Uncle Henry dwells in the world of Fine Entertainers; that he is destined for a following comparable to that of the old master himself, Porter Waggoner.

The Uncle and his place were regarded as Centers of Intellect, too. His knowledge of Indian relics far surpasses any other dealer in Maggie and in the rest of the States, as fas as anyone knows. Junior, of course, insists that Henry's knowledge of ancient cults is greater even than ". . . the learning of them bald-headed professors that dig fer their little bits." Along with his dealings in genuine Indian craftsmanship, Uncle Henry had nobly revealed that a small percentage of his own blood was, in fact, Indian. Physically appearing one hundred percent Caucasian, Henry hadn't *had* to concede such a misfortune, but folks said it was just like the Uncle not to hide such a shame. The drive-in crowd discussed over and over Uncle Henry's lack of prejudice and admirably compared him to ". . . the young fellers that fight fer equality in our races." Thus, was his name raised again in the recognition of his place in the New Breed of Liberal Thinkers. You know, it leaves me speechless to think what you could do with a mind like his!

As far as anyone in Maggie knows, Uncle Henry's fame is not disputed anywhere in the United States, and I don't doubt it. Henry and his audience are quick to assert the place's fame, especially by the fact that Mr. Peter Brown, the star of television's "Laredo," who was appearing at Ghost Town, visited The Drive-In. Henry, Maggie has decided, is one of the rising influences on the modern scene, soon to rank even with Billy Graham, another of the few greats able to reach the now generation. That day, the crowd only regretted that, "We can't all be so successful."

But as Junior comforted, "Some of us has to be the audiences for the more gifted."

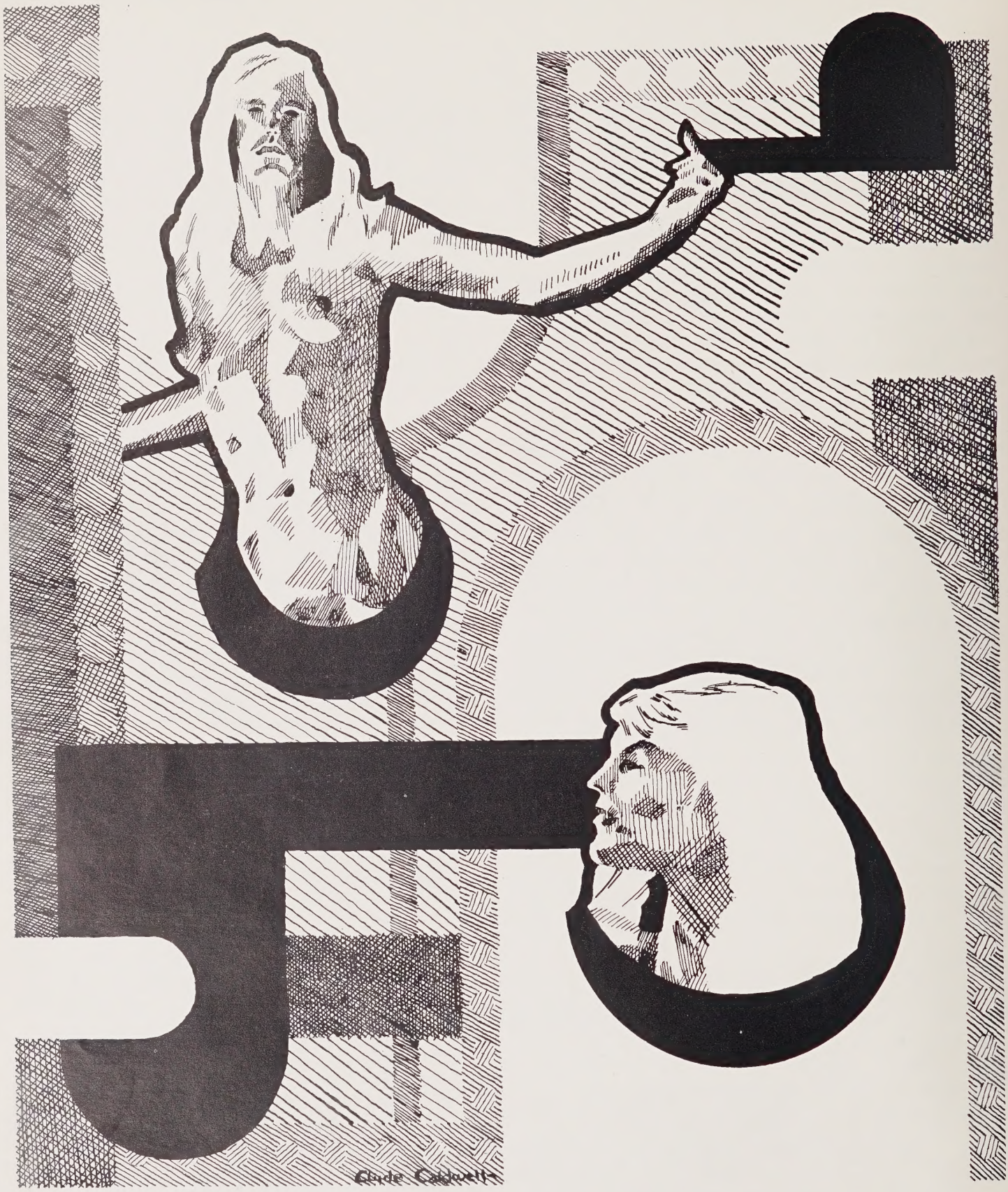
ECKERD'S

She pushed open the glass door and walked in. With deliberate steps she passed through the endless array of make-up, aspirin, and birthday cards, on her way to the coffee shop in back. She appeared to be about forty-five, and rather stately, although her big bones were amply padded. As she walked, her black hose tried stubbornly to bag at the knee, and the pointed toes of her high-heeled shoes clicked on the tile floor. She sat down heavily in the booth across from me and ordered a cup of coffee. With sallow, unsteady hands she removed her Polaroid sunglasses; her prominent hazel eyes were outlined with harsh black eye make-up, as if in an attempt to hide the invading network of tiny red lines. Underneath her sallow, puffy eyelids hung two dark half-moons, which the glasses had effectively masked; without them, her face looked weary and tense, and her true age was more apparent. Her artificially black hair hung almost to her shoulders, obviously still at war with an old and unsuccessful home permanent. One strand fell forward into her face; she twined it behind her ear, and began rummaging in her pocketbook. As she pulled out a pack of Salems, I noticed the quick gleam of a nickel-plated flask. She snapped the pocketbook shut and nervously lit a cigarette. Her coffee came but she was momentarily engrossed in shaping the ashes on the end of her cigarette—the smoke irritated her bloodshot eyes and she blinked.

INSTRUMENT

Opening. Closing.
Opening. Closing.
Before me, the blue-veined extremity
opening, closing.
Knotty projections
pointing, bending.
One banded, symbolizing unity.

DENISE CROSS


Clyde Caldwell

DATED

"Would you call Margaret Dunaway for me please?"

The girl at the desk nodded and he turned his back to her while she flipped through the pages of the blue folder of room numbers. He stood there as she said, "Margaret, you have a caller in the lobby."

The little light flickered as the "Thank you" came back over to the callers.

"She's coming."

"Thank you."

He sat down on the edge of a table near the door, careful not to watch every face coming out. It was annoying to exchange hellos with faces you had never seen before and prabably never would again. Besides that watching for her, he felt like a vulture.

"Hello."

"Hi." He reached for her bag as they moved toward the door.

Sorry I kept you waiting; I was ready but I couldn't get my suitcase closed. Things are pretty tight in the corners.

"Are you sure you won't stay at the apartment tonight? Al's date is going to and it really is okay."

"Did you not get me a place to stay?"

"Yes, I did. I'm just double-checking."

"Well, here it is a second time."

"Okay, I know."

"I heard the neatest joke today. Joyce told me as I was getting dressed. That's really why I'm late—laughing in my room, you know."

"So?"

"What did one pea say to the other?"

"What?"

"I crave your pod."

"You're right. That is very funny."

"What do you call a murdered Czechoslovakian?"

"A canceled check. That was one on the radio. I loved it. It was one of those deals where you heard it and say, I've got to have it—or how to fill up silent time with your date when you've only been together five minutes. What's your prob., granite face? Me-thinks I've nauseated you."

"Nothing."

He pulled her to him for a quick hug. As he pulled back, he smiled and said "Hi."

She started to smile, laughingly.

"Why are you laughing?"

"Oh, no special reason. I was just wondering if sex is the answer."

"You are the least romantically inclined person I've ever met."

"I find it hard to believe myself."

"You better get in the car quick before I wring your neck."

It was a long slow, fun drive full of funny stories and news of their days and finally an easy silence of two people comfortable with each other. The scenery was the same, winter or summer; there were evergreens that never changed and dry hay-colored fields strung along either side of the road endlessly. Suddenly she wanted to look at him.

"What happened in your mind just then?"

"I just wanted to see if you looked like I remembered you looking."

"Do I?" he laughed.

"Now I don't know because I have only you in my mind, each present time blots out all that was before."

"So if I really offend you now will it stretch into the future?"

"Probably so, unless I turn quickly and accidentally catch you doing a 'now good' thing."

"You say accidentally because you wouldn't purposefully give me another chance, would you?"

"You know me well."

"No matter how good it has ever been you're through with just one time. Why?"

"I wish I knew. It eats away at me. It becomes

something that touches every memory of you. I think about it too much."

Thinking was all she had ever done about a lot of things. In her mind she had done much more than she ever showed. It was a life of remembering lots of little things. A life of small achievements, too. She had spent most of it in verbal contacts—her favorite sport, her only sport.

"Why are you turning here?"

"I've got to buy supper. We're cooking at the apartment tonight—I mean you are."

"You'll be sorry."

"Not nearly so much as you will be if I'm not happy with the results."

"Did I ever tell you about the one-legged man who went to dancing school to learn how to do the cha?"

"You're making me ill."

"You love it."

"You're right. Gimme a little kiss before I have to battle the masses."

"Gimme a break and get out of the car."

"Do you want to go in with me?"

"Nope, I couldn't eat tonight if I knew how cheap the kind of meat you buy is."

"Who said anything about meat. I mean with you fixing it, I thought we would stick to cereal, a few bananas."

"You know you've really got a rotten sense of humor. I don't know why I play with you."

"I can't thank you enough."

"GO IN THE STORE."

The electronic eye snapped the door open for him and he walked to the far right aisle. As he picked up the package of ground beef he needed, he felt an arm go around his waist. Putting both arms behind him, he squeezed.

"Cool, it you creep. This is a public grocery store."

"Thought you were someone else, lady. Sorry. Do you buy groceries here often? I'd love to come and see you here again."

"Yuk. Yuk. Why don't you hurry?"

"I didn't think you were coming in anyway."

"I was having to think too hard out there. I decided to come in and talk to you. You know—give my brain a rest."

"Oh, pain, hurt me!"

"Would you get off the floor. It's dirty and you're embarrassing me. Besides, I have got to make a dent in your mental armor."

"Sure you have. Would you like to see the blood, the marks."

"Yeah."

"O.K. Thomas."

"It's doubtful."

"Miserable pun."

"But you loved it."

"You're right. We did the greatest thing in Governmental Policies today, we—"

"What an intellectual snob. Do you know that? You're very condescending when you speak to me."

"Condescending? Condescending. I'm not condescending. How can you say that. I know one thing though—you kind-of-send-me."

"Oh, no, that's horrible. You're the worst."

"It takes a lot of practice doing it this well."

"Well, that's definitely your score. Would you pay the lady and let's get out of here. I need fresh air."

The apartment was old, musty, smelling like her grandmother's used to be—old wood, lots of furniture polish and years and years of cooking smells all were part of the cool air of the dark hallway. They climbed the stairs—the sound of feet hard-soled shoes on wood sounded like first grade when the troops of other grades would march past her room. It was a good sound, resonant.

They entered the typical college room—too many psychedelic-colored war posters and furniture made from logs and fruit cartons. The beds were mattresses on the floor—so was the sofa. The living room also held a picnic table and bench, a stereo, and a little square bean bag he'd bought from "a sweet little old lady in Washington." A much-lined book of Cummings poetry was on the table and long-time tossed throw pillows were everywhere. He definitely lived here.

Their chili was quick and easy to fix, milk was healthy, if not fun. He placed a small fat, round candle between them. It was too dark to eat by but he left it burinng and turned on the hall light.

"Wow, you're so romantic. I was never aware—"

"Don't give me any grief. I do like candles though. The other night I sat in my room and read by candlelight I like it so much."

"Visions of a modern day Abe Lincoln well up before me."

"Gimmie a break."

"I will try harder. I dreamed last night you came home with me and you were so belligerent to my parents to prove to them they couldn't handle you."

"You really think that too, don't you? Actually, I was pretty appealing to parents just met."

"Bellbottoms, long hair and all."

"I usually go a little straighter for my initial en-

counters. I definitely don't think yours would care for me though."

"Do you dream often?"

"The best dream I ever had should be put into a movie. I really think I'll do it someday."

"I guess I'm supposed to go up the verbal path of asking you 'What was it?' "

"Only if you want to. So here goes—I came walking into this room and running along either wall was a table. The one on the right turned out later to be a communion table. Anyway, my four best friends from high school came walking in and I shot them all, one at a time, slowly, they never moved. I just went down the row, my very best was last. Then I walked over to the communion table and asked for communion, and waited for God to lift me up."

"You didn't really."

"Yup, but he didn't. Then the cops came. I was really mad at God for being late."

"You are a banana brain."

"So what was your best?"

"It was really horrible. I found myself married to a stevedore and my parents and none of my friends would let me stay with them. It was horrible. He kept pulling on me saying 'Please come home.' I was so sick, so nauseated and they wouldn't help me. I just needed someone to understand."

"And yet you never understand. You admit there can be only one mistake. Just one time when I'm not cool enough, one time when I'm too sincere. . ."

"I don't know why. ."

"That'll be all. That will be it. Funny, I don't like you for that at all but I can accept it,"

"I'm surprised. . . "

"If there were only the laughs I would never have seen you again. Something says you care how I feel. I wish I knew how."

"You realize this is too close?"

"Yes, but I keep hoping if I say it enough you'll become immune to whatever stings you about it."

FOR ALL THE WHITE MICE

u thought u
  were
    cool,
bein' white &
  havin'
    all
the advantages.

but us black
  rats
    ain't
gettin' cut up
  in
    the
name of science.

who loses?

C. E. Cannon

KATHY FETTER

SUNNYBANK

The little trawlers bumped against the dock, full to the point of sinking with the morning's catch. Under the tin roof the hot air was heavy with the strong smells of dead fish and sweat and the montonous buzzing of flies. Shovels were thrown down into the boats and crews began emptying the catch into big straw baskets on the dock, where dock-workers were waiting to throw the fish up into the large funnel-shaped bin. Fish fell from the bin into bushel baskets that filled and then were pushed onto the frayed conveyor belt that carried them to the scales. Old but quick eyes read the scale and nimble hands tossed extra fish out to the busy crowds of flies and dirty cats; the weighed baskets went down the rollers. At the opposite end of the rollers stood two young men, their glistening muscles flexing and relaxing, flexing and relaxing as they took the carefully weighed baskets and flung them up into the truck, ignoring the five or six fish that bounced out of each one and the twin rivers of water and blood pouring from the back corners of the gate. Toby's arms ached and his back was beginning to feel the strain; soon now his body would lapse into the familiar mechnical numbness—the baskets would seem a little lighter and the heat and the smells a little less stifling. He still had three hours to go. The truck was full. He went inside to the icehouse and brought out a five-foot block of ice on the pushcart; he heaved it into the humming ice-crusher and began shoveling crushed ice into the back of the truck. When the fish were reasonably covered, another truck backed in and Toby was throwing baskets again. He took the time to pop a piece of ice into his mouth between baskets; just then a weatherbeaten, grizzle-faced white man walked by. "Better not slack off there, boy—we brought in enough this morning to keep you here 'til midnight!" and he laughed loudly as he walked out into the bright dusty sunlight toward Mr. Weaver's store. Toby sneered as he threw a basket into the truck and watched five or six fish bounce out.

ROBERTA T. S. CHALMERS

SOUTHERN STORM

Friday morning, the whole top of my second-best holly had bowed over, and laid its load on the lower roof. The air was dark, but whenever I answered the phone I could see Venetian-red clusters of berries being reglazed by the drizzle, and sharp leaf-points extending in glass. There was no wind, but at five o'clock, is if by decision, the whole tree threw itself backwards, like a ballerina, over the power-line, and my Sheltie, a second ago standing quietly by the kitchen steps, shrieked in terror, and rushed away—to the front door. The power-line sagged deeply, but then, as for two and a half days, only a busy signal sounded from the Duke Power Company, which was importing extra hands from South Carolina and even a few from Georgia, to engage, day and night, against the storm. Schools had been closed, entertainments and appointments cancelled. No taxis were running, and no cars went by on Stanford Place—though now and again the sound of chains could be heard from Queens Road. (The city of Charlotte, it is said, has had one snow-plow since the blizzards of three successive Wednesdays in March, 1960; but no one I know has ever seen it.) The skies hung low, yet looked more widespread than usual, and massed with rolling grey wool, which would let out of its depths continuously now flurries of snow, now rain, now a mighty drizzle, and once, for a few minutes, dispersed hailstones which bounced in conflicting angles against the black of the open garage.

Saturday passed like a ghost, except for books and phone-talk, and on Sunday morning this variety of weather remained unvaried—aside from its results. First light, such as it was, disclosed neighbors' lawns, and mine, and the roadway strewn with branches large and small, twiglets, stems, cones, acorns, bark and bark-grit. The trees had gone grey overnight, and lost almost all their bough-lift; the bushes, dishevelled and beaten, seemed birdless, and my seven infant boxwood plants were mounded and glazed like Christmas puddings. No wind—and there hadn't been any during the night—but now and then the clicking of branch-ends against each other could be heard, or squeaking sounds as of new crushed leather. From my greatest tree near the road, with its witch-grey ivy vines heavy and lifeless, one of the largest boughs had been split, so that it hung sidewise by a few tendons, the yellow and rose of an open wound the only sign of reality in a nihilist world. The back lawn revealed the ravaged pine, all the down-curving lower branches which had formed for years an Oriental canopy over a favorite garden bench with its back in the design of a lyre, lopped off and lying on the ground among hundreds of small cones. But an empty bird's nest undislodged, clasped in a crotch and filled with ice, carried me instantly into a surge of remorse, because when last at the grocery to get food for a dog and a person, I had forgotten to buy any birdseed. The tunnel-opening in the thicket at the base of the garden, which had so long been used as a short-cut to the playing field and *Queens College*, was completely closed now, as if extra bushes had been set into it. In a corner near the crepe-myrtle, drooping in its burlapped ball, stood a four-foot Christmas tree, the first living one we had ever had.

No church bells—or if they did ring, they were too muffled to hear through the murky air. About church time I was sitting writing thank you notes at my desk, when Corey growled and barked and pranced, sending a small so well named throw-rug up and then into a heap against the wall. Five dogs, one Newfoundland, one Irish setter, one partial Dachshund and the other two nondescript, rushed passionately into the garden. I soon saw why, when a young brown rabbit poised for an instant at the top of the cellar stairs and looked piteously up at me—then vanished under driveway hedges. I knew it was safe, because of the chasing dogs not one could keep its footing but the Dachshund, too obese to be fast. The rest slipped and slid and fell—their heads and tongues in violent motion at each onset, and then their legs splaying out and their rears bumping down to stop the skids. At last they gave up and tore off to the meadow, where children in all colors of Christmas sweaters and ski or stocking caps, were making the most of sleds that usually collect more dust than snow, or fixing out long and longer sliding-streaks that showed up black in the white ground. At about three, I succeeded in raising a weary, incredibly courteous voice at the Power Company, but not until ten, as I was locking up, could two trucks roar to a breathing standstill by my curb—or where it used to be—the illumined red side of one of them showing snowflakes falling in the midst of heat-smoke. Then flashlights appeared to advance by themselves, mid-air to the driveway, except for crunching footsteps and a few gruff words, a burly laugh. A long while seemed to pass till thumps on the kitchen door let in a huge red-headed man, in new plaid wool shirt and leather jacket—a comfortable presence, whose tired eyes looked aquamarine, like an angel's, by flashlight. "Well," he said, "we've tested the holly and we've tested the line, and we think everything'll hold till she straightens up. We think we better take the risk—anyways, you hadn't ought to lose a beautiful tree like *that* one!"

On Monday morning, I opened my eyes to sunlight across the blue rug, and rainbows wavering among blue wallpaper flowers, from the prism in the hall. The first

voices I heard were those of children in the playing field. This time a few of them, doubtless the sons and daughters of Scots, had set up two box-goals by the widened sliding troughs. Each was equipped with a broom, wielded with much more vigor than obligation to sweep up kitchen or porch could ever arouse—only alas, mere fairly round rocks had to do for curling irons. The look of the game brought me delight mixed with nostalgia for the days when I had watched it three winters in Illinois, where the Rock River made Breughel holidays for skaters and sledders, by moon and sun, and along its edges curling was a game for old men—some very old and bent over. The *Rockford Star* accepted bets every year for the day and hour, even the minute, when the ice would "go out"—and finally, with an earthquake rumble and crash as of Judgment Day it *would* go out, carrying with it a host of pleasures unknown to the South.

Amazingly a taxi agreed to pick me up, and carry me storeward—for birdseed more than bread: I had made bread on Saturday, anyway, for the fragrance spreading through the house that would be a consolation against gloom—and then to college for registration day. The driver told me he had just brought a student from the airport who had never seen snow before, and that she had made him stop so she could get out and pick it up, taste it, smell it, make a snowball of as much as she could scrape from the crust, and that she had laughed and shouted over it like a child. The roadways were still almost empty, and the trees overhead in a paradisal gloria, their iced trunks blazing and blinding. When I left the office, toward noon, ice was beginning to thunder off the roofs, and shake suddenly in chunks, pellets and cylinders out of the trees. The paths were full of girls again in boots and Russian fur hats, gay stockings—and some with bare red knees. I heard one cry out, ". . . and so I came back to college just to be killed by *falling ice!*" Another mentioned the Agatha Christie story in which a person is killed by an icicle—and evidence melts away. But actually registraton at *Queens College*, Semester II, 1968, was such a day as will never occur again, although a similar day gave Mr. Frost the words about ice-pieces on snow-crust: "You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen." The three-day storms of this year's opening, with intermittent snow, sleet, rain and freezing drizzle, had coated every leaf and twig not once, but again and again. By dark, when the thermometer dropped, trees still glittered in the street-lights, and seemed not to have had anything to do with all that glass around their feet. At about four-thirty I started home by way of the playing field, or meadow as I like to call it, although it is dominated at one end, near the school, by goal-posts, a screen for ballgames, a jungle gym and slide, and tables made of boards across brick columns. It is a meadow for me when it changes overhead and underfoot with the changing lights of season and weather, and most a meadow when children—perhaps ten or twelve of them—legs dangling or clinging—ride their ponies bareback, from one boundary to the other, imagining themselves posses, perhaps, on some fierce errand, dogs flying before, after, and sometimes under them, and red dust rising around them.

The meadow was empty now—a vast expanse of crust, its nubbles rosily glimmering except where patches of snow-powder appeared against the ice—never in regularity, but rather in shapes of unknown islands and continents. Small clumps of grasses, each blade crystal with a spine of green, spread out like spiders, many of the blades hooked and handled into the crust. Very strangely, some short upright blades held globules on their ends, and often lollipops of ice stood in the snow, with no grass inside of them at all. Here and there flat green leaves had fallen, and perhaps in some brief melting, had descended from the surface to a depth of half an inch or more, with a minutely exact outline of their shapes left above them—much more exact than a cookie-cutter can leave in thinnest dough. Low shafts of evening now began to ply through myriad ice-pieces scattered near a guard of field-trees along Wellesley Avenue—striking fires of indigo, amethyst, tangerine, through squares and tubes, spheres and panes and triangles. For a while I was the sole inhabitant of the city of Revelations; the inheritor of all its gems. I picked up a sphere from a heap, the depression in one side fitting nicely over my engagement ring, raising it at once from a few to many carats. In the back garden the clothesline still held a perfectly regular fringe of icicles. About a foot of this had almost broken off near the house, and hung aslant. I wished later that I had taken it inside and used it fleetingly as a comb, for I was sure its teeth could have been drawn through hair, and that such combs were used by Anderson's Ice Queen, in whose place a mere boy, in exile and depriviation, learned how to spell out E T E R N I T Y in ice, as only older persons come gradually to do.

The excitements of Monday, January fifteenth, woke me early enough on the sixteenth to raise one shade on a Jerusalem the Golden that still obtained in the weak red rays of rising sun—and another on a place of silver and platinum, illumined by the moon, the steadfast morning star that seemed too large to be a star, "brightest and best of the sons of the morning," and a minute star near it that winked and trembled in apple-green. I could see that the holly tree was raising itself off the power-line, and that the tunnel to the meadow was open again.

JULIE FERRILL

EXPO 69-70

"Let's get out of here."
"Yeah."
"Where shall we go?"
"I don't know."
"The mountains?"
"Yeah."
"The shore?"
"Yeah, yeah."
"Where?"
"I don't know but we have to get out of here."
"I know."
"I'm bored with this room."
"Yeah. I feel confined."
"I need to air out my brain."
"How do you do that?"
"A manner of speaking, stupid."
"Stupid?"
"Merely an endearment."
"Oh. Let's go."
"Where?"
"Somewhere I can think."
"What?"
"I need to think."
"What?"
"Think!"
"What for?"
"I don't know. Don't you think?"
"Of course. I am a thinking rational man . . . a thinking rational man."
"I heard you the first time."
"What?"
"I heard you the first time."
"So?"
"You didn't have to repeat it a second time. I'm not stupid."
"Just an endearment. I didn't say it twice."
"Yes you did."
"No, I didn't."
"Yes you did."
"No I didn't."
"Yes you did."
"I didn't."
"Hey?"
"Yeah?"
"Let's get out of here."
"We've got to get out of here."

"Yes, we've got to, but where will we go?"
"Nowhere."
"Okay, I'll get my coat."
"Are you insane?"
"I don't think so."
"A coat? You are insane. It's summer outside."
"How do you know?"
"Because I think it was hot last time I was out."
"When was that?"
"I don't know. But it was hot and it was summer."
"No coat then. I would be insane to wear a coat in the summer heat."
"That's what I said."
"When?"
"Before."
"Oh yeah, you did."
"Let's go out now."
"Are you ready?"
"Yes, are you?"
"I think so. Where's the door?"
"It must be here somewhere."
"It must. Seems I just saw it."
"There it is."
"What?"
"What we've been looking for."
"I forgot."
"The door."
"Yeah, the door."
"Here it is all right. What now?"
"I don't know. This was your idea."
"No, it wasn't. It was yours."
"Oh, Well, look. I've forgotten."
"Now what?"
"We have to remember."
"What?"
"What the door is for."
"Oh. Let's sit down and think."
"What?"
"I don't know. Let's go back, I'm tired. What are we doing here anyway?"

It seems that they slowly melt into one another until the final blend that results is an indefinite fuzzy shadow. I cannot be overly critical though, because I can feel myself drifting, without much active protest, into much the same sort of oblivion. But I can say that my mind is free and it is theirs that are locked behind iron bars, imprisoned with a death house sentence, attended by a jailor named Fate who feeds them pieces of ignorance to satisfy dwindling appetites. But someone must have said something like this once: Better to be a fading shadow than a mirror reflecting false images.

KATRINA BLACK

BLACK OR WHITE

Burning from the smoke, his eyeballs were covered with sheets of water so that everything around him took on a wavy quality. Blurred before him were a group of jeering faces, their hollow mouths shouting and screaming exposing tongue and teeth. Hatred and tension was in the air all right; and, as he pushed the mob back, he knew that this night of hell had only begun.

"White man's Nigger!", a youth in the crowd shouted, his eyes popping like balls of cotton exposing the dark brown seeds.

"Uncle Tom!", sneered a black man spitting in his face, while stabbing pains of hurt and fear settled in the pit of his stomach.

"You Black bastard!", screamed a pregnant woman who was being pushed back by a white guardsman.

His body felt drained and the lump in his throat grew larger as he held his position. Shattering glass, shouts of "Black Power", and gunshots which seemed like cannons ringing in his ears were mingled with the stench of turned-over garbage cans and burned cinders, causing his throat to ache and his head to pound. In a hoarse, dry voice he shouted to the crowd:

"Get off the streets! Dammit! Do you want to get killed?" His warning fell on deaf ears and wrenched faces, lines of anger cut deep into them. Fires leaped up before his eyes as the apartment house across the street crackled crashing to the ground.

"Some Soul Brother, siding with whitey!", shouted a girl who stood right in front of him, her eyes flaming red from the smoke, tears trickling down her cheeks. She turned her Afro head away in disgust. His bayonet was almost touching the worn flowered blouse she wore. Moving the blade back slightly, he felt the wet green oversized uniform drenched with perspiration, the pant legs tucked into black, laced-up bucks. The gear strapped around his waist felt unusually heavy on his tired body, the leather gun holster seeming to cut off blood circulation in his legs. Hot, musty sweat poured down his broad nose and thick lips, his head encased in a green, metal, helmet with strap clasped under his chin. The cold steel that he gripped in his damp palms glistened as the light from the fires played on the needle point. It was this bayonet which was now stained with blood as a body fell back into the crowd, clasping a knife which had been meant for the soldier. Holding his bloody stomach, the wounded man whispered hoarsely:

"In a revolution the enemy must die!"

In the confusion that followed he could hear loud thuds as bloody faces flickered across his eyes mingled with the sight of other green uniforms. Like a streak of lightning ripping through his clouded brain, screams of pain and agony filled the night. Shocked he stood paralyzed at the sight of a bruised girl who was shouting at him:

"You murderer! You stinking damn murderer!" His body shivered at the thought of having killed one of his soul brothers. As if going mad, he tossed his head from side to side stammering:

"I . . . I didn't mean. . . Oh, God . . . I didn't mean. . ." As a guardsman pushed her away, his eyes followed her wretched face. Didn't she know that he had sworn an oath to take orders? Don't those deep-set eyes racked with fear and mingled with hate understand what a court martial is? He knew that the white troops had been watching him, wondering how he would act in this situation. How many times had he asked himself whose side was he on.

IVY

Brandon and I have been friends since conception. I mean our mothers were bosom buddies from Leeville Grammar to Radcliffe to "do you take this man" to now. They even made our fathers build houses next to each other. I honestly believe they synchronized their watches as to the exact minute they did conceive so that Brandon and I would take our first peek of the world simultaneously. They couldn't boss Mother Nature around, though; Brandon was born exactly three hours and fifty-nine minutes before me. I guess they got over it in time.

Brandon has always been the instigator of the two of us. She got the mumps first, and I followed suit. There's a blown-up picture on each of our mantels with the two of us in pink sleepers and five-inch extensions on each side of our necks. Our mothers thought it was cute; we didn't at the time. Once when we were about eight, Brandon matter-of-factly told me that we were going to quit sucking our thumbs. "It will make a huge bump on the lower lip, Nisie." We quit sucking our thumbs.

I never will forget the first time we got drunk. Our parents were out of town, and Brandon thought it would be highly educational to saturate our blood with ethyl. I never liked the smell, having had my nostrils cleaned out several times by over-adoring parents, and I knew I would hate the taste, but I was a good sport.

"Look, Nisie, we'll take a swig and then down it with a drag." We had been smoking since our twelfth birthday because Brandon thought we should celebrate with something different.

"That plan sounds infallible, Brandon, but have you ever heard of vomit? We're not above that."

"Get serious. We're level-headed young ladies who never allow ourselves to lose control. I'll go first."

Needless to say, within two hours, Brandon was hugging the commode. Actually, I didn't feel too badly, but not about to let myself be outdone, I promptly stuck my finger down my throat and proceeded to lose my cookies on her bed. I think she was jealous.

I ran for the offices in high school with Brandon right behind me. She chose which offices I would seek; she planned my platforms and campaigns; and she presided over meetings and took minutes in my voice and handwriting. I was even elected Homecoming Queen. I'm not beautiful, but by the night of the crowning, she had everyone in the student body believing I was Sophia Loren. I almost believed it, too, but when I looked down and saw my feet, I was cruelly shocked back into reality.

When it came time to choose our institutions of higher learning, Brandon and I had our first misunderstanding—but not for long. I wanted to go to Vassar, and Brandon wanted to keep the tradition and go to Radcliffe.

"I just can't see going there, Brandon. All our friends are going to Vassar, and we both like the school better, admit it. If you can give me one good reason for going to Radcliffe other than because our mothers went there, I swear I'll go."

"You want a reason; I'll give you a reason. Queers go to Vassar; it's a big fag school. Haven't you ever read *The Group?* It's all there in black and white."

I had read the book, and definitely not wanting to be socially unacceptable, I packed by bags, and Brandon and I began our lives as Cliffies.

"It's beautiful, Bran. Maybe you should enter it in something."

We were standing in our dorm room late in the fall looking at a water color Brandon had done in Art class.

"Yes, it is good," she raved, "and when you start producing, the whole room will be filled with glorious art. Oh, Nisie, I can hardly wait 'til we finish. Then we ca

go into advertising, and maybe someday have our own agency, and. . ."

"Look, Bran, I've been meaning to talk to you; I'm not going to major in Art. I'm not that good, and I'd really rather write."

"Don't be silly, you're great. We've been planning this for ages. I simply will not let you follow this foolish writing whim of yours—come on, Nisie, come back to reality."

"Brandon, you're great in art; I'm not. O. K.? Let's drop it."

"No. We'll get it straight now. Look, you need me, and I certainly can't help you if you're off in some T.B. clinic with all the other weirdos trying to write a masterpiece that will never be worth a damn. You alone ain't got it, Babe, but between the two of us. . ."

"Look, damn it, why don't you flake off and let me run my own life? For once, let me run my own life. I hate to draw; I hate turpentine, dirty smocks, messy oil, flakey chalk, and people who won't mind their own. O.K.?"

"O.K., Nisie," it was the only time I had seen her scared, "but we'll see in the end."

Winter came and so did the change in weather. It snowed and snowed and was so bitterly cold that the ivy on the buildings died. So did the little sprig we had rooting in our room. It really upset me; I hate to see anything die, much less something I put much love and care into. But I figured in the spring Nature would restore Radcliffe's ivy, and I would restore mine.

Brandon and I were not communicating as we once had. She began to hang around with a different group, an arty bunch from 'Cliffe and Harvard. Our mothers almost ripped their girdles when Brandon went skiing and I came home over Winter Break.

"Nisie, have you and Brandon had a fuss? It's not at all like you two to be separated like this."

"Mom, we've been like Siamese for nineteen years; I really think this disjoining will let us breathe a little more easily."

"From what I understand, she's been running around with some undesirable people."

"They're not undesirable; they're just conformists. She'll get over them when their ideas stop mirroring hers."

The mirrors were unbreakable, or either she was a south pole and they were norths because Brandon indicated no near break from the group. Toward the end of February, I was beginning to get concerned; she was either coming in at un-Godly hours or not coming in at all; she no longer attended class—"the profs just weren't with it." What really frightened me was that she was beginning to act strangely; she no longer existed in the realm she once did; her mind wandered in hyphens and semi-colons; she was unreachable.

"Brandon, we haven't talked too much lately. Um, look, I don't want to butt in . . ."

"Don't then."

". . . I want to; I mean I have to. We're still damned close. . ."

"No we're not; that ended with your high and mighty bid for independence."

"It's those people, Bran, they're ruining you."

" 'Those people' are my friends, Nisie, they need me; I need them. We reach each other through . . ."

"Drugs. It's drugs, isn't it? I can tell, Bran. Your eyes are glazed, you don't eat, you don't live. For God's sake, stop it."

"Who are you to tell me about living? You've never lived, Nisie. You've always followed in my shadow because you didn't have the guts to do it on your own."

"What do you call existing off pot and God-knows what else? Huh? Wouldn't you call that shadow-boxing?"

"No, it's what I call living. I know what my goals are now. I know exactly where I'm heading because I have enough guts to know my mind. Remember last fall you told me to get out of your life? Well, get out of mine."

She was gone.

Spring is peaceful. Flowers are no longer screaming to be born; the sky looses its musty gray coat; lawn mowers sing sleepy duets with bees; people are free from their chilling bonds.

I left home right after the funeral. Too many memories, artificial memories, were there; unlike Brandon, alive. "Hit and run," said the papers, and her parents and my parents, and all the other planners of life and death. But Brandon was a steel wall and her assailant a Sherman Tank. Infallible plan, Brandon, but have you ever heard of bricks? Bricks and tanks don't mix.

They're replanting the ivy that died last winter. Fools.

CATHIE HENSON

ALL THE COMFORTS OF HOME

It was definitely *her* room. The shiny spoked wheel chair braked beside the double bed explained that in itself, but the rest of the room typified its owner, too. The smells confined to her small habitat were somehow like those of a newborn baby's nursery. Missing foulness, mild odors of candied powder, stale urine, molding fruit, and sweat mingled to a sort of sick sweetness which, in the close heat, intensified the feeling of decreptitude. Off-pink walls trimmed with white wood, and a bristly black-and-white striped rug still composed the background after so many years. Gingham curtains with tiny cross stitched edges, products of her capable younger days, limply framed dirt-glazed windows through which her wildly sprouting flower beds were visible. They seemed to be cruelly teasing her—calling her to that to which she could no longer return—with the breeze that now waved them.

The dresser, fussy with doily mats, was a congested attraction at the other side of the bed. The mirror, whose wood frame held curling school pictures of grinning grandchildren, reflected the toilet articles arranged on top. Countless pill bottles, a bell within reach of the bed, talcum powder cylinders, a box of Kleenex, a set of false teeth resting in a glass of cloudy water, brushes filled with white strands like Christmas angel hair, two rolls of toilet paper tackily covered with crocheted dresses attached to rubber doll heads, and a cup holding the pulpy remains of a soggy doughnut were crowded on the dresser. In the dust coating atop the brand-new but never-used color television, a present from her well-meaning children, stood a framed announcement of her husband's death and a dried brown flower pressed since the funeral. A plastic terrier, an inch-and-a-half tall replica of the old family pet, was set facing the frame, as if begging his master back to life. This extreme sentimentality was rather unpleasant in the still room.

The bed reeked of invalidism. More silver bars of dependency were roped to the side of the bed. Besides the fringed white spread turned down for its bedridden occupant, many coarse blankets lay piled on the side of the bed. Pillows stacked three deep at the head, a pillow for elevation at the feet, and disposable absorbent safety pads placed halfway between, specially characterized her wooden bed. A portable toilet seat—childlike with its removable potty—leaned half hidden at the far side of her bed. The door to the adjoining bathroom gaped, and tell-tale metal bars at arm level on the wall glisteningly boasted their aid in her infirmity. As the pitiful sounds of sliding slippered feet and the heavy thumps of a man-made walker approached the room, the mechanical encouragings of the nurse echoed alongside.

KATHY FETTER

SARAH P. DUKE MEMORIAL GARDENS[1]

The sun reappeared
And the pale colors of the
Rainbow dissolved as
The mist melted from sprawling
Limbs heavy with wet blossoms.

The sparkling green
Grass rolled past beds of early
Tulips and patches
Of crocus to a bank of
Cherry trees on the far hill.

The big wrought iron
Gate clanked as a little girl
Dragged her father through
The damp speckled shadows and
Into the fragrant sunlight—

He carried a kite.
She ran down the gravel path
And out onto the
Wet grass, her blue dress streaming
Behind, her socks falling down.

She planted herself
In front of the frothy pink
Cherry trees and waited for
Her father; he came striding
Down the path, his steps crunching.

He walked across the
Grass to the cherry trees, where
He set the yellow
Paper kite on the ground
And pulled out a ball of string.

The little girl watched
Gleefully as he tied the
String to the kite; he
Finished and began looking
Critically at the clearing.

Then he ran up and
Down the long stretch of grass with
The kite flapping like
An insane butterfly
In his wake. The little girl

Laughed as she waded
Through the grass behind him; he
Stopped and pulled a strip of
Old sheet from his coat pocket,
Tying it fast to the frame.

That was much better;
The kite soared and hung over
The pink cherry trees,
Dangled its knotted cloth tail.
The little girl held the string.

The string outlasted
Her patience, and in a few
Minutes she was handing
It to her father when it
Slipped and went sailing away.

He ran across the
Grass after the trailing string,
Looking like some tall
Skinny bug racing with his
Shadow in the afternoon sun.

The kite tangled itself
In the top of a cherry
Tree, where he gave it
Up as lost, and took his
Crestfallen daughter home.

The heavy iron
Gate clanked behind them,
And the park was silent
Once more. Shadows lengthened and
The frogs began croaking;

The frothy pinkness
Of the cherry trees turned peach
In the setting sun;
A cool breeze ruffled the leaves
And the kite waved its cloth tail.

[1]AUTHOR'S NOTE:

Verses are basically tanka—a five-line form of Japanese poetry with 5 syllables in the first and third lines, and 7 in the second, fourth, and fifth.

BOBBIE CALHOUN

WHITE NOISE

We went to hear
The band
And
We heard
The band
Sing of
Peace
And
Getting together
And
I thought
"That's Great, but can you do it?"
"Sure,"
The band resounds,
"With noise and electronic sounds
It's all so groovy
We're bound
To get together."
So
We stayed
And
Listened to
The band
And
At the end of $5.00
I came unglued.

DENISE CROSS

SCREENS OF DEATH

I

Ah, to see them go
Gone to the expressions on their faces.
Gone to where they never again shall gaze directly.
    As they lay: twisted of pain,
    blank with absent emotion,
    smiling of relief.
To see them leave the darkened room—
Gone to repeat a fuller, deeper darkness.
Gone to escape solace, yet secretly hoping to find it anew.
    It comes packaged with: a stifling air,
    a stagnant sadness within,
    an echo of relief, a whisper of sorrow.
And then all relinquished at last.

II

I have seen him manuever through a crowd
To flirt with one, take quickly another.
I have heard the whirr of the sickle cut down the young,
Take gently the old.
I have seen the death of each cycle,
The silent gait that impeaches man's immortality,
Cuts short the intense blackness of the night.
Night that would be no more if moon beams broke, tides unbuckled.
For what will be darkness when the lamp burns down
When the fire is frozen in the mind of man.
When the spark embers because the mind is gone.
When the sun beats not, there will be no light.
Though the moon beats shadows on the frozen fire,
They will be undistinguishable.

III

When the sun's cord is severed and the moon down
When the mind turns to salt submerged in sober sands
Men will feel for idols with sightless fingers
And seek ideologies with senseless skulls.
The tongue will be still
The night a forever, the stars dull stones.
When there is no flame, and there is no sound
No voice, nor cry,
We will again grasp God
We will seek for Man
We will be seen and heard—
A congressional funeral of a catholic nature—
As we slip noiselessly, like needles,
Through the screens of death.

DEB WILLIAMS

OF PASSED RELATION

In a conversation the other day
your name was mentioned.
I immediately answered that
I used to know you.
After recollections (forced)
and laughter (even more forced) about you
my casual comrade
reflected that it was strange that
I had known you
She was referring
of course to our
common knowledge
of you
I think the better word is acquaintance
I smiled
and quietly agreed with her.
Anyway,
after she returned to her anonimity,
and I to mine,
I continued
my thoughts.
The common thing to say,
at this point, is
'We had good times, didn't we?'
you had good times.
I watched you and
pretended
to be a part.
I should also say
'It was good knowing you.'
It wasn't so much
you that I knew,
or know, for that matter.
It was the memory,
the idea.
It would have been nice knowing you.

SHEILA CREEF

CONQUERORS OF MEN

Remember your Uncle Mark who swung you by the heels
and made you laugh so hard
and rubbed your temples when they ached
kissing your forehead with every stroke
you were his only love
you
and the little girl down the street
were the conquerors of men
being used as nature's temporary storeroom
for twigs leaves and blades of grass
while tumbling in the sun
Each one so bright so pure
like the first evening star
yet ready to be yanked from their heaven
To lay by the side of every stray dog in town
That was all of us once
moving with the masses in disorganized tribes
letting our beauty and wit run free
sharing it equally with the butcher
and the old lady who sits on the porch
every afternoon about four
It's good that was once us
it makes the lonely hours not so long
the chances of love not so slim

SLIPPERY WHEN WET

and at the corner the green light is
burned out, though the red still glares brightly
from within its hooded retreat.
discouraging it is when the whole world is a
dead end and even the street signs are determined
to cross you up and send you down the wrong
stinking narrow alley. i would travel the sidewalks
but even they are cracked and uneven. one could
lose all hope. the street lights are reassuring
at night and provide the wayward stranger with a
safe goal. i often long to deliberately not
yield to a yield sign or challenge the order of a
one-way sign to see if it is just bluffing after
all. and i sometimes make a brief investigation
into the validity of dead end signs which usually,
really always, proves to be futile. nevertheless,
if i could just find one liar.

our lives seem to be already determined by
metal placards and blinking lights.

occasionally, the green light flickers.

PAUL BAKER NEWMAN

AFTER READING PLATO: MAYAGUEZ, P. R.

In the immemorial, mute and standing-there
stillness of the papayas and the palms,
the hoarse cock crow of day's end echoes
stasis beyond stasis, and the sea
murmurs faint, discordant as all farewells.
And small dry scentless blossoms
secure in the wind that scarcely stirs
their stamens
show, reflected in a glass,
the mirror and the looker balancing,
the act and consciousness, reflecting,
burning clear of excess: forms.

TOMORROW AND TOMORROW AND TOMORROW

A scrupulous whispering of chill
water in the leaves, a talking of the wind
made voluble by rain's discourse—the ice
drips slowly from the stunned sullen eaves.

There are certain rocks in men
from which the cool fountain flows, broken
at God's hand.

The thistles' shorn bare heads like puritans
devoutly murmurous, austere, beneath the wind
show us how expectation
lingers in seeds and splinters of cold clear sunlight.

A leaf skids slowly across the heavy ice
its edges dragging in the veins and air-holes.

SHERRY McGEACHY

ARCHETYPE OF SPRING

The orange gray robin lies dead in the highway
His once smooth feathers arranged in disorder
By the wind and passing vehicles.
An archetype of spring—dead.
Prematurely obliterated before it
Had a chance to flourish.

I suppose the bird was flying across the roadway
To some distant hollow meadow
In search of a place to make bird foot-prints
In the soft earth.

The details are not important.

The breeze blows a little colder now;
The sun's rays bend before they penetrate the earth.
The millions of still-living robins lose their significance
And melt into a mirage of dappled wings and blue fragile egg shells.

The wind bolts through the trees
And sends last year's birds' nests
crashing to the ground.
Only to shatter into pine straw, tiny sticks, and mud once again.
Reminders of a former spring destroyed by winter's struggle to maintain
dominance for a short while longer.

The battle is won
For a few hours or days longer
Because the lone robin lies
Dead
On the asphalt.

WHO'S THERE TO ANSWER

Right about now I'd like to do
A little something for everybody
That's been getting a little
Depressed.
Yeah . . . . I'd like to do something for
Everybody that's lost some of that
Good good feelin'.
I'd like to take everybody's burdens
On my shoulders and tell the whole
World 'bout how it is.
I'd like to tell everybody 'bout how
It ain't s'posed to be but how it
Always ends up bein'. . . .

I'd like to start off by sayin'
That sometimes you get to runnin' a
Little ragged when you ain't even
S'posed to be runnin'.
Sometimes you get to thinkin' that
There ain't no right nowhere no
Matter how hard you look.
Sometimes when all this is happening
You get to thinkin' that you're runnin'
Into a stone wall.
Sometimes that wall can get so hard
That you just have to cry, cry, cry and
Cry some more.

Sometimes you get to wonderin' 'bout
Which direction you're goin' in and
How you're goin' to get there.
Sometimes you get a little depressed
And down just thinkin' 'bout it.
And a whole lotta times you get to
Worryin' 'bout yourself . . . . and your
Parents get a little 'shamed.
You know they do 'cause you know they
Care.

Sometimes you get to thinkin' 'bout
How cold it is outside . . . And right
Now I think it's a little chilly inside.
Sometimes it gets so cold that you
Have to cry for a little help.
You kind of be cryin' out loud . . .
. . . . but don't nobody hear.

Sometimes you get to ride on a
Pretty white horse.
But sometimes that horse'll stumble.
And you . . . . you fall . . . . you come a
Long way down . . . . ain't nobody around.
You get to cryin' again.
You get to cryin' for this big hurt
That you're carryin' all by yourself.
You want somebody to share this hurt,
So you cry some more . . . . you wanna
Cry out loud.
You wanna cry. . . .

. . . . but don't nobody
hear. . . .

. . . . Sometimes don't nobody wanna hear.
They kinda go like . . . . uh huh, uh huh,
I see, I see.
But you know yourself they don't.
Sometimes they'll even say . . . .
Serves you right to suffer . . . .
But that don't ease the pain none.
But it can make you feel mighty bad.
It can make you feel bad 'cause you
Know that don't nobody wanna hear.

Sometimes you think you got to
Scream a little.
Yeah . . . . it be hurtin' so bad that
You just have to scream out loud for
Everybody.
So right about now I think I'll scream
A little.
I wanna scream . . . . I gotta scream . . . .
I gotta scream out loud! . . . .
I gotta screeeeeeaaaaaaaaaam! . . . .
. . . . . but don't nobody hear.

So sometimes when you're cryin' and
Screamin' . . . . . cryin' and screamin' for
A little help . . . . . cryin' out loud for
Somebody to hear . . . . and don't nobody
Hear . . . .
Sometimes you get to wonderin'.
You start to wonder a little bit about
Who's there to answer . . . .
. . . . when you're down and out . . . .

LEROY!

PROLOGUE. . . .
A while back I lost a prety good
friend . . . . his name was Leroy.
He wasn't too bright . . . . he was kind
of on the dense side . . . . matter of
fact, if his IQ was one point higher
he would've made a pretty smart tree.

He wasn't cool or nothin' like that.
No . . . . wait a minute . . . . on second
thought he was cool 'cause he didn't
try to be cool and when you don't
try to be cool you kind of end up
bein' cool . . . . . and that's cool.

But that's enough of that 'cause I
want to go ahead and tell you 'bout
my main man Leroy . . . ol' Leroy.

Well ol' Leroy he couldn't never
do nothin' right . . . . . 'cept get high.
He couldn't sing and he couldn't
dance . . . . . he couldn't do none of that
stuff that white folks think a nigger's
s'posed to do.
Ol' Leroy couldn't even run fast.
But all of us, we dug Leroy.
Yeah . . . . everybody dug Leroy.
He was kinda like our pet . . . . our clown.
Couldn't never be but one Leroy and
that was our boy Leroy.
He wasn't cool . . . . but he was still
Leroy . . . . ol' Leroy.

Ol' Leroy said that he didn't never
steal nothin' . . . nope . . . . he wouldn't
do nothin' like that.
But you know he tol' me one day that
everything he had cost him three
fingers and a fast getaway.
Sometimes I used to wonder 'bout ol'
Leroy . . . . not his stealin' . . . . I wondered
'bout his lyin' . . . . I just couldn't dig
that at all.

Ol' Leroy . . . . my man Leroy . . . .
He did everything to the beat.
Yeah . . . . ol' Leroy would kinda walk to
the beat and he'd talk to the beat

and he'd jump to the beat and he'd
hump to the beat and he'd cuss to the
beat and he loved that beat and he had
to have that beat and . . . . matter of fact
I'm startin' to dig that beat a little
myself . . . . . but we gotta be cool so
let's get back to the subject . . . ol'
Leroy.

Yeah . . . . . ol' Leroy was a rogue.
He's the one that got high and asked
that ol' blind, crippled man if he'd
walk walk a mile for a camel.
That wasn't cool at all . . . . . but that
was Leroy.

But ol' Leroy he's dead now.
Yeah . . . . . Leroy's done passed away.
It seems like he decided to go to the
beach one day.
He went to the beach and he had an
inner tube.
It was one of them big ol' truck tire
inner tubes.
One of them big bodacious mothers.
And he had him four reefers with him.
He took them four reefers and he
smoked 'em in that inner tube out
there on the river.
He messed around and got high in that
inner tube out there on the river.
He got high and he got drowsy out there
on the river.
He go high . . . . he got drowsy . . . . and he
slipped through that inner tube out
there on the river. . . . .
. . . . . and he drowned.

EPILOGUE. . . . .
Well they had ol' Leroy's funeral
the other day.
The undertaker did him up good.
Ol' Leroy had on a six button Edwardian
suit and some seventy-five dollar alligator
shoes . . . . . and he had his shades on too!
He was laid out real neat like and he
was lookin' real good.
That's our boy Leroy. . . .
He was cool. . . .
he was dead. . . .
and you
know what. . . .
He was still high. . . .
Ol' Leroy . . . . yeah Leroy. . . . .

C. E. CANNON

PLEASE CHECK THE LIGHTS (IN THE BATHROOM)

where
are
the
lights?

some/
body's
playin'
games
with
me.

guess
i'll
have
to
play
it by
ear.

i'll
aim
in the
gener/
al
direc/
tion. . . .
like
this. . . .

& hope
for
the
best.

splatter!
oh! oh!. . . .
i missed.

guess
i'll
move
it to
the

left
a little. . . .
splatter!
oh! oh!. . . .

well
over
to
the

right
a little. . . .
splatter!

damn!

i
think
i'll
move
it up
some. . . .

splatter!

down
a
little. . . .

splatter!

well
to hell
with it. . . .

splatter!

splatter!

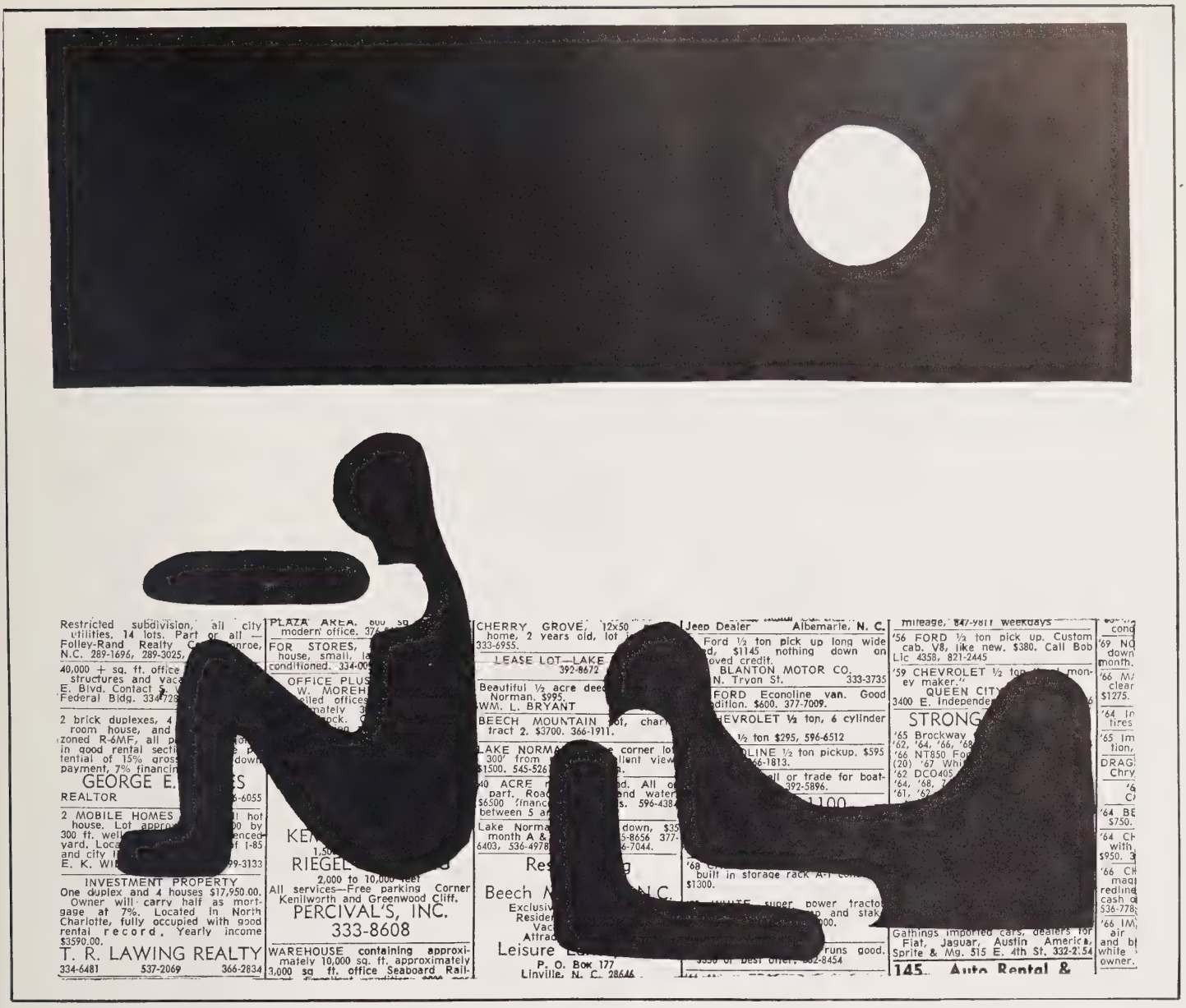
splatter!

ONEGIN

My rain-flecked window frames a section
Of gray September's restless sky.
I wait, transfixed, for ten long seconds
While two bright leaves learn how to fly.
Hard grains of sand that measure minutes
Describe one path between two limits,
But leaves will trace their own designs.
Fantastic doodles, life in Time.
Two shapes set sail on heaven's ocean.
Their intertwined calligraphy
Joins two discrete biographies
To form their monogram, an omen.
At last, to fall! Beginning? End?
One Autumn morning. Eight A.M.

SUNSET OP. 53

That girdle might have killed her!
U n - c o r s e t e d ,
R e l a x e d,
E x p o s e d,
R e l i b e r a t e d
M i d r i f f of the Sun!
The cool horizon sags
Beneath her weight.
She stretches
Languidly—
And slips into the night.



KATHY MITCHELL

IMAGINATION

Through the gossamer screen
I saw an ember of energy
and eyes
like a soft shield
of blue warmth.
Dark faceless forms
were bright with sparks from the ember.
Drifting,
on dust-laden air,
came specks of light
like strands of hair,
that web single thoughts together;
all becoming
one complete imagination of blue.

JAN GIBBONS

SEPT. 31

Well-worn tennis balls
occasionally clang against the wire fence
lips parted, she juices chewing gum loudly in concentration
and serves again.
The breeze is high in the yellow-topped trees
and the leaves flap like fluries of suspended ticker-tape
while the unblemished blue sky silhouettes
a continuous wall of burnt-orange, green, yellow, red trees.

It's like watching
a baby in a play pen
she's been hitting balls across the net,
under the net,
over the fence,
continuously for an hour.
A beginner yes—so no one's desperate enough to play with her,
she's always liked the courts to herself anyway
with ammunition enough to serve fifteen or twenty times
before crossing the court to return fire to the other side.

It's good to see
her out here again
in the same old faded cut-offs and navy sweatshirt
encircled by that maze of balls.
Hey, in the service area! she *is* improving
maybe she has found herself by now.

Back

and
forth
with this identity crisis bit all semester
crisis for real—
who am I . . .
why am I . . .
no one but herself to turn to.

Alone in a group
mentally segregated from friends
afraid then happy, darkness then light, questions—answers—questions
the hollow whack of the racquet silences.
She stands staring at the thin trail of smoke
that leaks from a distant stack
goose pimples make the hair on her legs stand out
and wind pushes the leaves around again.

She's thinking how
she'd like to be on the beach at home

running along against the wind and salty spray—
if it's rough.
Maybe there she could think clearly
but it's 800 miles to that decayed old pier
and Pete's Bait 'n Tackle and watching sea gulls
fly back and forth diving into white caps after shiners.

There she could sit
close to him on the blanket
not seeking understanding in a telephone receiver
but in his eyes.
Yes, he would listen to the surge of feelings
she'd spill into his mind
and he would laugh and cry with her honestly
sharing her doubts and faith, confusion and foresight, emptiness and love.

That's the way
it is in her mind now
she's churning with questions and trying to label feelings
that can't be defined.
The sky is cloudless, the autumn leaves
are more beautiful than they ware last year
but her world is covered with
a heavy fog that rises then falls, clears then thickens.

She gets smothered
with things that seem so unimportant
like translating Spanish, reading Bright's *History of Ancient Israel*
and practicing tennis.
Now she's batting balls across the court again
clanging the wire fence and juicing her gum—
maybe she'll find herself soon
if time and distance will set her free.

THE POINT

Yellow—Red—Green—GO—
1, 2, 3, 4—Green—Red—STOP!
Trains running parallel—
Sunset Highway; black tar, white lines;
ribbons forth beneath wires
draped from pole to pole—
hanging wire archways—drooping wires.
Slow trucks moping ahead
on the narrow two lane road.
Brake, gas, brake, gas—
Damn sweat dripping down—
growling at the slow moving—never moving traffic ahead.

Sand crunching beneath the treads. . .
swerving left through the narrow drive—
now slowly creeping towards the open garage
and house to the left.
The screen door opens out—
their tall figures gliding out—smiling.
Becoming lost in their eyes—blue, flowing, clear;
we move in from the warm ocean breeze
to the cool wooden feel of their summer home;
sliding glass doors, paintings splashed with freshness
balance the nervous moving papers strewn
over the large old desk against the wall.

Making play talk, we sit—
sipping our icy drinks. . .
leaving with orders of a half hour deadline
to the ocean not two blocks away.
Toes, tipping in the cold splashes;
balancing on the rocky bottom below;
flinging me back and forth;
riding me in and out to exhaustion;
salt clinging to my lips and hair.
Walking back I quickly lift my feet high in the air
from the soft hot tar beneath my soles.
Sitting on the steps we watch him
fiddling with his makeshift smoke house—
to store the too many fish
that gathered around his pole,
crawled into his large rubber boots and deep pockets
in the early morning light
before the surfers came splashing them away.

A long climb into his dark green wagon;
clean with seat belts, cool air, cold doors—
not like her warm white skylark
grayed from the city smog;
seat flopped against the red wheel—
seat belts dangling from the dusty vinyl seats—
hurriedly thrown aside.
Riding smoothly over bumpy land;
wild flowers jutting out between the green leaves and weeds—
a tall old house passes on the left—
its cemented windows painted . . . looking real—
like an old farmhouse—camouflaged.
Creeping to the rocky earthen edge;
scanning the blue undulating expanse below . . .
its foam lapping upon the sandy lips.
Montauk Point, its fishing boats arriving one by one—
colored by sea gulls hovering over the day's catch;
weighty fish split and cleaned within an instant on the dock.

Back again in the long high wagon
riding past an old hotel . . .
its windows cracked—paint faded.
Back again in their home we sit—
sipping beer to wash the dryness away.
Then, off again
map sketched by him in hand—
their teasing cuts still on my mind—
they smile again—wave—are gone.

NICK MADDOX

PHASES THROUGH PHRASES

Praises be to all our new-found guilt,
In partner with peace it forces to wilt all power
which would tend to lend a tilt to our
well jilted orb.
Through outright compromise and loving consideration
all affairs of lief fit a tale of alliteration
with a balanced combination of
lumination,
education, and
fertilization.
Man's eventual progress is scored in measures of years
as man equates himself with similar peers,
previous,
future, and
present participle.
Through progressive mistakes man derives
pleasure,
bliss, and
faith whereby he may cry to his
ever-present pilot in times of strife to
forgive,
mend, and forget;
at least until another volley of unprecedented fate
collides with the settling silt.
Capability to create havoc have long left the ballot,
our hefty war mallet; within the grasp
of fiendish treachery.
Powers grope for territorial diety while ringing claims
of protective piety reign supreme:
Unless the sovereign interests deem necessity cure
of pestulencey.
Man spiro's in achievement of material gain
through
studied factoring and liberal hatchetry: only to leave

uncured,
unhealed, and
draining thee wound of drought,
disease, and
dissent.

NICK MADDOX

Is the truth such a folly as to believe that he has

evaded detection, while,
looming in the twi-dark of despair?

Youth with nostrils primed for pure air
reflects,
perfects, and
rejects

the behavioral pattern deemed normal
present perfect,
per se.

Gapping credibility gap reflections, a time long ago
outdated by time;
completely,
in contact with gaslights and one-hundred horses.
Man's worth lies not in the rich girth of fathers' mirthment
but in enriched fortitude of attitude amongst the youth.
Believe forever, only begottens, that future scales must
be conquerable and livable under contradictions
of adverse naturisms.
Td. The Beginning?

MICHAEL McDOWELL

I STOOD CRUCIFIED AGAINST THE STARS

I stood crucified against the stars—
no fortunes in my palm.
I slipped my hand into my pocket
only to find there had been a hole
in my life.

Only the cricket-bitten night air
witnessed my agony.
No more mother's cooking
to pull the blanket over me for the night—
only scheming branches.

Moon, you are my only hope.
Shine on some tailored path
so that I may dress for my verdict.
I must not tease this stranger
for I must outlive the night.

JULIE FERRILL

METAMORPHOSIS

Thoughts of dying had been entertained by her before. As a matter of fact, the thoughts had become a natural part of her waking routine. She would wake up every morning and make sure Timbo was under the bed. Timbo was her gangly Irish Setter who was definitely neurotic and sometimes positively schizophrenic. He would always sit off balance on his right hip with his head sagging slowly but noticeably lower and lower and about two inches of pink would show itself between the closed dog lips, contrasting humorously with his red coat. But his pointed head gave him his most definite comic character. The total effect of expression was Lord of the Manor bankrupt and miserable, preparing to face the doom of Skid Row or something equally horrible. She loved that dog and when she woke up in the morning she would watch him sleep and feel a surge of loneliness as she measured the quick and regulated tempo of his breathing. And the loneliness would give way to mild anger at her friend, this dog's audacity to be asleep when it was time to be awake. Her eyes tried to flash warning signals through his unopened lids. But when clearly he did not respond, she resorted to hermetical tactics of mental warfare. She would convince herself that she could penetrate his unconscious with her brain waves with only the least amount of concentration. This sort of foolishness could last from five to thirty minutes depending upon her imaginative state and general mood. Of course, Timbo awakened when he felt like it and she would usually resign herself to forcing sleep again, a little fearful that the dog would accidentally awaken and discover her ridiculous games.

This particular morning, sleep would not come during the usual interval of Timbo's sleep and arousal. She shut her eyes so tightly that the muscles in her neck throbbed and when she opened them that special color-wheeled kaliedoscope, unique to the human eye, delighted her until it dissolved into the realism of her room. She supposed the room was nice enough, but very unsophisticated and filled with antiquated memories of her Mother and Father—tennis rackets, wide-brimmed straw hats with velvet ribbons were hidden in the wardrobe closet and probably had been there for thirty years. On the wall over the small mantel were blurred photographs of the West Point LaCrosse team, '39 and '40. These things would habitually jump out at her when she was least expecting it, when she was thinking something she should not have been thinking. It seemed they were almost human and that they could reach out from wherever they were hiding and rouse her into abandoning her imaginative fancies. Finally, she would have to resort to more common thoughts of dying. She did not mind thinking about it, because usually it exhausted her mentally and physically and she was pulled back into sleep. Sometimes she would hold her breath until her chest hurt with the expansion or she would frighten herself by thinking her next breath would never come and she would die unromantically in bed like an old woman. Or sometimes she'd position herself on the bed in true dramatic style of suicide. Inevitably, an arm would hang limply over the side of the bed, suspended in mid air, and the rest of her body would be situated among tangled sheets that perhaps suggested a painful struggle against death.

Such was this morning's routine. But she couldn't wait for that lazy dog to wake up and she didn't want to go back to sleep. Something in the morning air had confused and excited her. She slowly and a little hesitantly sat up in bed and swung her legs over the side so that her feet were touching the ground. She put all her weight on her legs and stretched to the sky, flexing her fingers towards the ceiling and making a strange, pitched noise that came straight from her diaphragm. She walked to the dressing table and sat down. She brushed her hair dutifully and then looked at the end result. She stood up and studied her whole form as objectively as she could. Yes, she was definitely a woman. But she didn't feel like a woman nor did she particularly like being a woman. It had happened too soon. Her metamorphosis had been unnaturally hastened by her own intelligent curiosity to find out what love and the stronger sex was all about. She had found out all right, and had suffered through the ordeal with all the typical feminine emotions. Now she needed a rest and sought this place of her childhood as a refuge. She needed to lose herself in the place she had escaped to every summer since she could remember, and to find herself in the land that had cared for her so well before. She had spent a year and a half exploring herself and being explored and in the process she had learned her capacities and inabilities and had emerged from the affair feeling inadequate and consumed, all used up and old. But she had almost recovered herself and regained her perspective by conditioning herself against thinking. She only wanted to feel and not to probe and dig into reasons, rational explanations. So she stood looking at herself wondering if there had been any noticeable rehabilitation and feeling abated in a state of half woman, half child; progression and regression.

EDGAR EXUM

CHAUCER AND THE QUESTION OF ANTI-FEMINISM

Much of Chaucer's poetry in the *Canterbury Tales* deals with the topic of marriage and many of its ramifications (sex, love, fidelity, the "battle of the sexes," etc.). Perhaps the most important aspect of his various treatments of the marriage institution is the question of anti-feminism, and the poet's interest in the issue is clearest in *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* and *The Wife of Bath's Tale*. There can be no doubt that Chaucer is interested in the subject of anti-feminism since there are numerous references throughout the text to antifeminist literature (particularly in the case of the Wife's fifth husband, Jankyn, in lines 623-735). Determining where Chaucer stands on the issue, however, is an altogether different question. A look at the close prologue and the tale reveals not only that Chaucer was not an antifeminist, but one of the most shrewd and clever champions of feminine rights in literature.

The prologue is a parody of antifeminist thought in a twofold sense. In one sense the Wife of Bath is a monster created by antifeminist thought, forced into the role of the deceitful, conniving shrew by the mere fact that such behavior is expected of her as a genetic extension of the wantonness originally attributed to Eve. In another sense, her own "pro"-feminist views are characterized by the same one-sided logic employed by the antifeminists in presenting their case. First, in considering this "monster" that Chaucer has created, it is revealing to note those characteristics that gives her the ability to make her husbands miserable. In lines 401-402, the Wife affirms the antifeminist allegations in stating that "Deceite, wepying, spynning God hath yive to wommen kyndaly, whil that they may lyve." In lines 226-228 she advises, "Thus sholde ye speke and bere hem wrong on honde; For half so boldly kan ther no man swere and lyen as a womman kan." However, there is more to her admissions than simply confirmation of all the vices attributed to her sex. Here we can see how Chaucer chides the antifeminist in a manner far too subtle to affect condemnation by the anti-feminist reader. On the surface the Wife lives up to all that woman is accused of, but there is an interesting result from this seeming concession to the male ego. Man is defeated by his anti-feminism. Scorned at the outset by a lack of trust and respect engendered by her inherent femaleness, the Wife embraces that handicap to her advantage, using those vices cast upon her by masculine egotism as the tools with which she deftly destroys the sovereignty sought by her mates. In addition, she exploits the male view of women as a sexual object by denying that object when certain favors are desired (lines 409-411). Indeed, every action of the Wife of Bath seems to confirm an antifeminist tenet, yet each such confirmation in turn serves to weaken the sovereignty of her male counterparts.

The Wife's presentation of her argument for female sovereignty, is definitely the more skillful and effective of Chaucer's two approaches, for in addition to proving that the case for the sovereignty of woman is equally as well founded as the argument for the sovereignty of man, it shows that both sides of the entire issue are at best absurd. In line 130 the Wife speaks of the conjugal debt of the husband as described by St. Paul but does not mention the fact that the Apostle also tells of the conjugal debt of the wife. In lines 158-159 she refers to her power over her husband's body but

again fails to note her husband's power over her body (also from St. Paul). Both of these biblical citations are examples of the antifeminist tendency classic to use surgically removed biblical references and quotations in presenting their ideas—a tactic that becomes necessary only when there is no case to be made. Her plea for freedom in lines 318-336 is a reversal of the age old double standard promulgated by man in declaring that the husband is entitled to more freedom to go where he likes and do as he pleases within the marriage contract. Certainly her request is an outlandish one, but it is no more licentious than what the antifeminist male often practices without ever considering the possibility of seeking the approval of his wife. Chaucer's cleverness in attacking the antifeminist viewpoint can best be seen when it is noted that in every instance of the Wife's diatribe concerning what one sex owes the other, if each masculine and feminine terms were reversed, the result would be pure antifeminist doctrine. Hence, as the medieval reader laughs at the absurdity of the ideas of Chaucer's Wife of Bath, he unknowingly points out his own erroneous sexual egotism. In all fairness, however, this reaction can not be attributed solely to the medieval reader but to all readers of Chaucer who are given to favoring the superiority of one sex over another.

Prior to evaluating the actual *Wife of Bath's Tale* as to its relevance to this question, it is interesting to note the Wife's account of her fifth husband, whom she loved best (line 513). Jankyn was the most openly antifeminist of all her husbands and constantly confronted her with his antifeminism. The Wife's response, in turn, is more violent than with any of her other mates, and the eventual result is an understanding between the two. One might be tempted to question why if Chaucer believed in the equality of women he had his Wife of Bath fighting for female sovereignty rather than equality. The explanation for this is simple enough; be it "fight fire with fire" or the more sophisticated "thesis-antithesis-synthesis", at least Chaucer is to be admired for realizing that a crusade on the part of the Wife for equality rather than domination would not only have lessened the comic value of the tale but also, in a realistic sense, would not have been as effective a tactic for the wife to employ. In light of this fact, one can understand why the tale itself, since it is told by the wife must necessarily involve the capitulation of the male. Aside from this one unfortunately necessary detraction, the tale told by the Wife of Bath is, in essence, a remarkably beautiful philosophical essay.

The tale may be deemed somewhat of an essay, because in it Chaucer abandons parody and goes straight to the resolution of the problem of antifeminism. The knight, whose masculine egotism is exemplified by his crime, learns what it is that women desire most—sovereignty—a desire that can arise only from the anguish of being dominated and stripped of human identity by man. He learns also that man's greatest fears are a result of his own tragic attempt to possess the female without recognizing her individuality. Only when the knight learns to respect woman is he able to experience her love, and it is with this note that Chaucer makes himself perfectly clear. He is genuinely aware of man's need for love and concerned that man so often does not know how to find it.

WAITING

Silver torrents splash
Through the darkness—icy gusts
Whip against glass panes.
Inside, she waits patiently,
But the lamp goes out at last.

KATHY FETTER

CATHIE HENSON

THE AUCTION

"Auction. Property of J. Clyde Heath, deceased. 7 acres land. 2 horses, mule, cow. Model A Ford. Wagon, good condition. Plow. Other farm implements. Many cow bells. Churn. Antique furniture. Jelly safe. Chiffarobes. China. Old books. Many other items, too numerous to mention. Hardin and Son, Co."

When I first saw the newspaper notice scrunched among all the want ads, I had torn it out and read it anxiously to my best friends. We had decided unanimously to make that one our first auction, so on a late October morning, we followed the bright red arrows out to the abandoned property.

It had seemed strange driving up the dirt road to Mr. Heath's former home. On both sides, the Halloween weather had withered the woods past their colorful autumn peak to brown bareness. Curling signs nailed there and in the yard were unheeded now as they warned, "Private. Property of J. Clyde Heath. Violaters prosecuted." But even though cars were pressed evenly in rows on impotent garden plots, and people trampled the estate, it was as if we were trespassing on the run-down land. A decaying house slumped beneath a huge oak on the gullied land, which now flaunted two Hardin and Son refreshment stands serving ham biscuits and sandwiches, coffee and doughnuts. Now silently touching and scrutinizing, now loudly bragging of past bargains to strangers and friends alike, the human swarm seemed so intensely alive compared to the decadence it infested.

We moved among them cautiously, standing first in awe of the enclosed barnyard and displayed tools which looked like the rusted relics of museums labeled "Colonial America." My eyes scanned the muttering cluster of men who surrounded the model A possessively while their wives clucked their tongues and motioned toward a pitiful flower bed whose dead plants seemed to bend their heads shamefully. A shovel stood neglected in the earth where someone had stabbed it recently, for a white worm was sliding its way over the sharp edge, as we strolled to investigate the house.

At the foot of the slope at the left of the shack, only dry crumbs of dirt lay forgotten in a dried-up creek bed. Inside the house, too, there was the same feeling of neglect. All the rooms but one were empty and black. The front room, though, was stacked with boxes of Heath's old things, cupboards, pieces of beds, a few chairs, shelves of books, and trunks, all waiting to be distributed to new owners before the day's end.

Back outside, bare trees shook in the cold sun. I noticed the fragile grey flakes of ashes in an old fire bed in the back yard, and I wished that it were still able to share its warm life with me. My friends and I numbly stamped our feet and breathed cloudy puffs in the chilly morning air as we anticipated the bidding. Soon the auctioneer stepped out and called everyone to the porch.

He was puffy with a flushed face and reddened eyes, and his alcohol smell permeated the air heavily even to where I stood. He leered at us before the auction began

and then stumbled about in his attempts to sell. After about twenty things had been highly spoken for, Hardin pulled out a huge framed religious print. He guffawed obscenely, saying something about "a nice Sunday School pitcher." It was definitely ugly. A barely clothed maiden clung to a mammoth rock cross in the middle of some turbulent ocean as lightning flashed and waves drenched them. Immediately, I could see the fanatical picture hanging in my room. The crowd and I discussed the art work critically before Hardin started soliciting his price, but one scowling old lady was silent next to me. For some reason, I felt I had to own the picture, so I bid more than I had planned. But in my hands it looked greater than I'd ever imagined. I turned to the quiet woman to make conversation and asked politely. "Do you like it?"

"Sure I like it," she replied bitterly. "I liked it when Joe-Clyde and I picked it out some six years ago."

I couldn't even reply to her revelation. It was so hard to believe she was here at the old homeplace at such a tragic time, and probably no one—not even Hardin—knew it. When I whispered her identity to my friends, we subtly eased through to the other edge of the crowd, where, out of sight, we were able to shake her out of our minds. Caught up in the bidding wave again, we jointly purchased what Mr. Hardin bellowed to be a "mystery trunk." We claimed it unopened—our only clue was the sound of Hardin's shaking it before the group. We agreed not to open the trunk until we were away from the Heath homestead. Just before the climax of the day, the bidding on the A Model, we collected my picture and our trunk and began walking back to the car. As we did, Hardin senior yelled through his microphone, "Bye now, little ladies. Come back 'n' spend some more cash. Ha, ha!" When we turned around, the entire crowd and the glaring Mrs. Heath were facing us.

"Vomit, you dirty old man," I murmured as Hardin waved.

"Did you see Mrs. J. C. checking us out? I swear, she was scary," my friend said, as we hurried to load the station wagon.

Finally home, we breathlessly opened our flowered cardboard trunk and pulled out funny purple crepe dresses and pink knit, flat little furry hats, delicate baby clothes, an old hearing aid, heavy underwear, a pair of bifocals, and two very old men's suits. We looked and laughed for a while, but suddenly we poked them back into the trunk. We had been trespassing again.

ELEPHANTS

the wind
lumbered in,
sprayed the trunks
and trumpted through the branches,
hardly seeming like whistles;
then turned and bumped out
leaving leaves exhausted
in the thunder
of aging footprints.

RICHARD W. CARR

C. J. CARLOCK

THE GOLDEN PRISM

The sand, windblown and untouched; folded in soft ripples along the Jersey Shore. I could see only a few white ruffles of water spilling onto the wetted smooth lips of the sand. The splintered boardwalk was already beginning to burn my feet as I stood listening to the young voices in the background. Freshly painted white guest houses and motels stood across the way. Pat and Denise soon appeared in the doorway of the Jolly Mar Hotel signaling me to come in. I locked the car and ran over to join them. The lobby looked pretty nice—nothing spectacular but at least it was better than those other flea joints we'd been into that morning. I was ready to grap anything. Kids were already beginning to swarm into Belmar and its was only 10:00 A.M. We finally cornered a waitress who clued us in on the manager's hangout—the kitchen—where we caught him cracking eggs. It seems he played a triple role of owner, manager, and cook. We got the idea that he wasn't the friendly type when he shouted, "Get the hell out of the kitchen—No rooms till twelve," as he poked at us with an eggy spatula. We waited around until 12:20 when the manager and this other clown came out and told us that they only had one single left. Being the generous types, they offered to pull another single bed into the room and charge us only $7 each instead of the usual eight. It was too late to find anything else, so we snatched it. Off we trotted, dragging our luggage up three flights of stairs to this room which was too much to be believed. It looked like a squashed closet. I've seen better accommodations in the Columbia State Prison. Two single beds lying side by side were crammed up against the wall; one dresser with no draw handles leaned on three legs against another wall, three wire hangers dangled from a hook behind the entrance door —our CLOSET. Beautiful—just beautiful.

Denise collapsed onto one of the beds . . . "This ain't too bad." She rolled over towards the wall to block the sun, hitting her nose on a wad of newspaper stuffed into a hole as big as a silver dollar. "What the hell is this?" she shouted as she yanked out a ball of Sunday funnies and peered into the darkness.

Pat strolled out into the hall to "spy out" the adjacent room. A minute or two later a light came on and Denise spotted Pat's orange pants through the hole. "Where the hell are you?" Pat crouched down and yelled through the opening, "You won't believe this, but I'm standing in the bathtub in the community bathroom. What a scream!"

"The person who had our room must have really been a 'goodlooker'," Denise cackled.

I decided to get out of that scrufty place pronto, so I zipped into my bathing suit and headed for the beach. The others trailed along after me. At least I didn't have to walk far—that was the only consolation. Pat and Denise came down a few minutes later—in their new "show and tell" bikinis—I sat in five year old black and white knit one piece feeling about fifty years old. Being the motherly type I stayed to guard our possessions while Pat and Denise went to parade along the boardwalk to scout down some of our long lost friends. They returned about an hour later with what appeared to be an itchy emaciated cowhand—bare-footed; his hairy chest showing under his silver vest; shirtless—his chloroxed bluejeans papered to his scrawny legs; a gold, cowboy hat perched atop his nest-like black hair—He scratched his neck, his shoulder, his arm, his leg, his neck, his shoulder, his . . . I'd swear he had the creeping crud. I waited patiently for an introduction but settled for a friendly, "Give Goldie a cigarette, will ya?" I dropped the cigarette into Goldie's hand and moved back pulling Pat to the side. "Where'd ya pick him up?"

"Denise is trying to get some grass for us tonight. I don't think she's gonna get any, though. Goldie says he hasn't been able to get any lately."

Goldie left about this time, so I laid back down and tried to remain cool. I must have fallen asleep.

Denise was bound and determined to get some "stuff." She asked around and found that Goldie used the broken down Volkswagen bus parked across from the Jolly Mar as a makeshift apartment. "Hey Goldie, are you in there?"

"Yeah, who is it?"

"Denise, can I come in?"

Goldie held the curtain to the side and pulled her in. "Listen man, I told you I can't get you any grass. How 'bout some hash?"

"Hash? What the hell is that?"

"It's just like grass only you smoke it in a pipe."

"I don't want any of that crap. Do I look like I carry a pipe, for Christ sake?"

"I'll make you one. How much do you want?"

"Give me a nickel bag. Are you sure this stuff is safe?"

"Sure. I'll bring the stuff to your room around 8:00 p.m. and show you how to smoke it."

The sun was beating down on me for about half an hour when Pat woke me up—saving me from being burned alive. We gathered up our junk and trudged to our lovely attic chamber. Denise arrived a few minutes later. After changing our clothes, we took a drive

to find something to eat and returned about 7:30 p.m. I was determined not to sit in that hole all night, but hoper for some good parties looked dim. Belmar was overrun with high school kids this year. It looked as if we'd picked the wrong spot. Pat and I decided to take a ride to Seaside Heights to see if anything was going on down there.

We had just finished dressing when someone knocked. Denise answered the door—in paraded Goldie and one of his followers. I cringed at the thought of their being in our room. Goldie whipped out a tissue containing what appeared to be a brown flint and flopped on one of the beds. He told Denise to give his friend the nickel—he took it and left hurriedly. Goldie pulled his home-made pipe out of his hip pocket and carefully lit about one-eighth inch of the "stuff", madly sucking—breathing in all the smoke he could. Pat and I were tempted to try it but chickened out. It began to look as if Goldie was getting more turned on than Denise. He demonstrated; she practiced; he demonstrated; she practiced. . . . In about half an hour it was already gone. Goldie quickly cleaned up all the remains and quietly left, thanking Denise—who just sat there with a silly smile.

"I don't feel a thing. I don't know what that stuff was, but it ain't very powerful—and you sure don't get a whole lot of it for $5. I'll bet there wasn't even anything in that stuff. I wonder how he found our room. I don't remember telling him where we were staying. How stupid! I bet Goldie is a Pimp. Look—there he is. He's outside talking to some guys. Now he knows where I'm staying. We have to get out of here! Come on. Let's take a ride—we have to get out of here. No—we better not. I can't go. Leave me alone! I can't go—they'll get me if I go out there. Leave me alone! Are you one of them too! Please— NO! ! I have to stay here and watch out the window."

Pat and I led Denise down the old wooden steps. Off to the side stood the manager and another man talking and laughing rather loudly. I whispered to Denise to straighten up and keep quiet. I didn't want her to make a scene, but she kept babbling anyway.

"I wonder what he's doing down here? I'll bet he's spying on us. I know he is. Look—he has a camera!"

"Shut up and walk straight—you're being ridiculous!"

"He took our picture. I saw the camera. He's after me. Let's get out of here!"

"Keep her quiet, Pat, before someone hears her."

"They're following us. There's another one. The Narks must be after us too. That manager must be in with the police. They've been following us all day. Goldie must be the big pusher here. It all fits."

Denise became even more belligerent as we shoved her into the back seat of the car.

"I've gotta go back! Leave me alone. I can't go! They'll get me if I leave! They're following us!"

Pat climbed into the back to try to calm her down. People started to notice her shouts and move towards our car—I peeled out of there like a bat out of hell. All the while Denise continued her hysterical pleas. I knew she couldn't be right but she still had me a nervous wreck. She kept on and on and on. I couldn't stand it any more.

"*Shut the Hell up or I'll crack your Goddam skull!*"

But she wouldn't stop—"That car—it's following us—I know it is—I've seen it before—There's another one—go faster—we gotta get away—faster!—faster!"

Finally we reached Seaside. We found a parking place about three blocks from the pier. Just as I was getting out of the car I noticed a fight beginning across the street. Denise had spotted it too.

"Don't get out. Let's get out of here. They *want* us to go over there and watch. They've staged that fight for us. Stay in the car. That car has driven past three times already. I saw him at Belmar. Don't leave me. I have to stay here. Please. . ."

"Get her out of the car. She'll be alright. We'll walk her around for a while. That stuff can't last much longer. I swear—she's paranoid—she's even hallucinating."

We each took one of her arms and walked her towards the amusement pier. She fought us all the way—always turning around to see if anyone was following us—and always imagining someone.

"They're following us. Why don't you believe me. It's all a plan! They're gonna get us. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to get you two in trouble."

"Shut up, Denise. We're not going to get in trouble. I've *never* seen any of these people before. You're just imagining all of this. If you don't shut up the cops *will* be after us though."

"See, you believe me. They are after me. That guy in the stand over there is calling us. Don't stop. Don't stop to play those silly games. They just want to get me. Let's get out of here. They're closing in on us."

"Hold her up, Pat. She's starting to sway a little."

"There's a detective. I told you they're after us—Goldie and the Narks too. Why don't you believe me?"

"He's not a cop, stupid, shut up."

"Sgt. Carter of the Narcotics Bureau. I'm placing you three under arrest."

"He's not a cop! I tell you he's not a cop. You're paranoid. It's all an hallucination. It's a dream. Shut her up! ! !"

CATHIE HENSON

THE CYCLE
(A PLAY IN ONE ACT)

Characters:

Jungle Jamey . . . . . tramp, wanderer
Clayton Dennis . . . . . former hospital orderly
Lovers . . . . . girl about 16, boy, 18 years old
Roger: . . . . . 8-year-old boy

Scene: A deserted hospital, abandoned for around 10 years. Some furnishings still remain: twisted metal bed frames, broken wheel chairs, swivel-type office chairs, ragged mattresses, broken chairs suggested; there must be an old drug-blood bank refrigerator on stage. Generally shoddy in appearance: plaster fallen to the floor, paint curling on walls, remnants of curtains dangling at the windows. Most of the action takes place in an old wardroom, but also visible are a doorway, a hall, and an adjoining room.

(As the play opens, Jungle Jamey is asleep on the floor, perhaps on a mattress there. Clayton Dennis enters, looking around him in wonder and stepping cautiously, as if he is in some unfamiliar world. He walks through the entire room, touching this and that rather worshipfully. Finally, he steps to the center, lifts his arms as if despairing, and sighs deeply, letting his whole body droop. He is obviously very disappointed in what he has found here. He turns to leave but walks into Jungle Jamey's sleeping body on the floor. He is very startled at first; then he bends to shake Jamey awake.)

Clayton: Hey! Hey, come on. You! You wake up! Come on, now. Hey!

Jungle Jamey: Wha-whatsat? (very excited upon seeing Clayton; jumps to his feet, smoothing his clothes. cheerfully) Ooooh . . . Well, why didn't ya say you was comin'?! I would'a made the place and me more presentable.

Clayton: (straightening up) But—you don't know me . . . (he speaks noncommittally; as if in a trance)

Jungle Jamey: Know ya? Hell, no! But you're com'ny, ain't ya? Say! You care fer some beef stew? Only take me a sec to heat it up. (moves to remains of fire on floor in corner) I always say—tarnation! Run outta fire wood a'ready. Now, I told myse'f I's needin' to get me up some more—I just runs out back in them woods —but (chuckles) that's what happens, I reckon. Listen, I can—

Clayton: (still inspecting Jamey and ward room carefully) That's quite all right. . I didn't want any stew, anyway. (stares off distantly. his thought seems to be elsewhere).

Jungle Jamey: Aww, come on! I tell ya the stuff's good—meaty'n'all.

Clayton: (questioning sluggishly) You been here long? I mean do you live here and all, or what? Do you know about this place?

Jungle Jamey: Well, they tell me it's been deserted now fer 'bout ten year. It's got all I need: build my fires

right here on the floor, got soft mattresses fer sleepin', my comp'ny comes and—

Clayton: I mean, why are you here?

Jungle Jamey: Oh! Well now, I was on my way to Warshington—to crash that inaug'ral ball, you know? See, that's my life: I'm sort of a (chuckles) profesh'nul party crasher. Shoot! 'at's how I got my name—Jungle Jamey. I was crashin' a safari party fer some Texas millionaires! (laughs loudly) Say, are you one of us? I mean, are you a rover, too?

Clayton: Uh—Yeah . . . (He's obviously not: his clothes are neat and clean, unlike Jamey's, and his whole manner is different) I guess you could say I'm a rover. I'm looking for something, anyway . . . (covering) But that's not important. What I want to know is, do you *know* this place? Do you know about its life?

Jungle Jamey: Do I know this place? Man, inside out I knows it! I ain't been livin' here most of two weeks fer nothin'! (spits noisily on floor) Seems like I always got to get a good feel of where I'm at, you know?

Clayton: (lethargically) Yeah . . . a good feel of the place.

Jungle Jamey: Went up to the top floor las' week, 'n' you know what? They's bars on the winders up there! (lowers voice confidentally) I figger it's where they used to keep the crack-pots! You know—the nuts! Dang! I reckon they did need somethin' to keep those dangerous 'uns in!

Clayton: (dully) That's right, keep them in. . . I did it—kept them happy inside. Only they weren't so bad. Not half so dangerous as those that came to visit them. Those were the ones that needed the bars. If Id'a had my way, I would've let most of them out. But I never did.

Jungle Jamey: Wha'd ya say—you was *here*?

Clayton: (obviously covering a slip) Uh . . . no. No, I wasn't here. This place—uh . . . it just reminds me of a hospital I used to work in . . . a long time ago.

Jungle Jamey: Well, let me tell ya: this place is still hoppin'. I can swear to that. It's sorta fallen down some, sure. But it's as alive as it ever was.

Clayton: What's that you say?

Jungle Jamey: Oh, yes—hell! They's been some things goin' on in here! Livin' here hasn't been lonely at all, hardly. Folks always seems to keep comin' in; all of 'em fer differ'nt reasons. They's all got some trouble they bring in my hospital, And I guess it helps 'em. Least they keeps comin' back. Like the poetry writer. A young feller. He come in most ever' week. Don't bother me or nothin'—just sets in 'at room acrost the hall 'n' writes his stuff. Sometimes he lets me come in, 'n' I sit real quiet 'n' watch. An' he might read me a verse, or he might not. Depends on his mood. But I can see him change: when he gits that stuff wrote down on his paper, he's smilin' inside, I know. He's not famous—says it just started pourin' out one day, 'n' his folks beat him. He comes here so they'll leave him alone.

Yep, there's people—all kinds—breathin' under my roof here. They comes 'n' goes, an' some gets healed 'n' some don't. But that's life . . . just the way it was when this hospital was alive, I reckon. Ya know?

Clayton: (mumbling to himself) Yeah . . . like when this place was alive. I knew it then, but I guess I don't know it now. All of that cycle within these walls I used to know. From birth to death, I saw it all.

Jungle Jamey: What you say?

Clayton: Oh—just how a hospital works with the life cycle. Birth to death. The whole bit—you know?

Jungle Jamey: Yeah, that's what I's sayin': Some lives endin', and some goin' right on inside here. Somethin' happ'nin' all the time . . . (chuckles) Excitin' things, too! Once a couple come in—come in that room next door? (During this speech, Clayton's reactions should be quite evident: horrified, disgusted, and finally, bitter) Real young folks, not but about sixteen or eighteen both—new lovers. I could tell by list'nin'. They touched me, though—guess 'cause she was so scared. Whooo—yes, hell! I'll remember tha 'un fer a while. The feller, you know—made his play? (Jungle Jamey goes on with his story, mouthing the words to Clayton. Lights come up in the adjoining room to reveal a teenage couple. These two scenes are played simultaneously)

Girl: (quite nervous) You're sure no one will find us here? I mean—

Boy: (impatient, anxious to proceed, attempting sincerity in speech to the girl at times, but usually missing. As the scene progresses, he should become more tense and make more intimate passes at the girl: playing with her hair, kissing her, touching, then stroking her body. The girl is jumpy and wanders about the room, inspecting it, as the boy follows closely. She is trying hard not to be excited by the boy.) Yes, I'm sure. Now are you satisfied? See baby, there's nobody here. This old hospital's been abandoned for years. Now stop worrying, okay? (kisses her neck) Everything's going to be fine, akay?

Girl: I don't know. I don't know if I can go through with it now. It might hurt me—something might go wrong . . .

Boy: (tensing angrily, but checking himself) okay, honey. Just answer me this: Do you love me? Do you love me or don't you, 'cause that's just exactly what it comes down to. I don't think you do. If you did, you wouldn't deny me this.

Girl: (taken in) Oh, yes! I love you—you know I do. It's just that I don't see how giving myself to you is so important to our love just now. (sits down on delapidated chair, wheelchair, or bed)—I mean, even before we're engaged. (Boy mouths answer. Scene goes back to other room.)

Jungle Jamey: Oh, yessiree. He talked and talked, courtin' her into the act. Oh, he wanted her, all right. I was lyin' right here, an' I heard it all—I knew he wouldn't take a "no" from her. Anyway, she sure must'a had serious eyes for him, 'cause she ate up all his sweet talk. Even the bunk about Viet Nam he pushed on her. Now that's a line, sure 'nough. (Chuckles)

Boy: (now half-reclining on the floor) Well, it *is* important. How am I gonna really know you without knowing you *totally?* You know, (touches her) you've got a beautiful body. We should be close—we need to touch. (takes her and, pulls her down to floor with him; he holds her in his arms) Listen. It hurts me for you to hold off like this, you understand? It *really hurts* me . . . (seizes a new idea) Now that I've been drafted, you know, it's even more important. I uh-don't have much time left. It might be my only chance ever to know your love for me.

Girl: (almost convinced) But . . . if I get in trouble? What can I do? You'll be gone.

Boy: Baby, there won't be any trouble. (kisses her ear, rubs her arms) I tell you I'll-uh-take the precautions. Nothing can happen, honey. I'll be careful. Leave it to me.

Girl: But, do *you* feel for *me?* Do you *love* me?

Boy: (unconvincingly) Sure, baby, sure. I love you. Now come on . . . (pulling her down flat beside him on floor) Yes, that right. (urgently rushing) It'll be all right. (Lights go out) I won't hurt you—I promise.

Girl: I-I love you. Tell me you love me, too. Oh, make it safe. Please tell me. . .

Jungle Jamey: Uh-huh. I could hear 'em breathin' in the next room. He took her, all right. The whole works—'n' all right by my ear. Damn, it was good, you know? That feller had him some kinda . . . . . (pause) only I think they left empty—both of 'em . . . I mean, it's enough to—(a young boy enters quickly with something concealed in his jacket. Jamey winks and motions Clayton to be still. Unaware of the men, the boy darts to the old blood-bank refrigerator, in which he stuffs jacket and all. He paws noisily through a box of junk)

Jungle Jamey: (lowering voice) Oh yeah. He's another 'un. Fergot to tell ya 'bout him. Comes in a lot, 'cause he keeps his treasures in that old drug refrig there. Just junk. I think he's sorta at that age—when he needs someplace to come, secret-like. . .

Hey, boy. Whatcha got today? Didn't steal nothin' did ya? (chuckles) He's a little one, but ya can't never be too sure. (chuckles again)

Roger: (very startled) I-I got nothin' new. Just my old stuff—rocks 'n' things. I-I'm clean. I didn't take nothin', I swear!

Jungle Jamey: Well, shoot, son! Didn't mean t' scare ya so bad! (winks at Clayton) I know you gots a fine collection over there. You go right on playing, now—we won't bother you.We got some visitin' to do. (elbows Clayton) . . . Say! Now, wouldn't he like some of my stew—a growin' boy an' all? (Jumps to his feet) I'll just be a minute fer the firewood. (he exits)

Roger: (eagerly) Firewood? Will he build a fire?

Clayton: (very calmly) Son, what is it?

Roger: Uh . . . (starts weakly, but gains strength as he builds his story) He's getting firewood! To build a fire for us here. To make things good—bright and warm. Then I won't have to go home. It'll be nice—like out in the woods. We can roast things we kill on the fire. Can't we? We can get warm, too. And I can stay here wi-with my treasures.

Clayton: (persuasively) What do you have there, sonny? I'm not going to tell anyone. Just let me see.

Roger: I haven't got nothin', mister. I promise.

Clayton: Something new and nice, I'll bet. Share it with me—come on. (pausing, as he picks a different and bolder approach) I'm your friend—you can trust me. Look. We're giving you a fire. Now, aren't we your pals? Tell me, son. What's your name, anyway?

Roger: (giving in) My name is Roger. But, mister, it's *my* treasure. I didn't want to share it. I want to keep it here—only for me. It's not bad. It used to be my mother's, but now it's my very own. My name's Roger, and it's mine now.

Clayton: What's *yours,* Roger? What's yours *now?* How can I understand if you don't show me what it is? Come on, show it to your buddy.

Roger: Well . . . can we still be pals when I show you?

Clayton: Sure, Roger. We'll be pals. Now whatcha got, friend? (Roger drags the limp body of a just-dead cat from the refrigerator. Clayton inspects it, immediately pained by it; it seems to recall some harsh memory to his mind)

Roger: (noting Clayton's reaction anxiously) See? It's not bad, is it? I had to have it. It was my mother's very own. She would play and play with it. I didn't like it, but now I do, 'cause it's mine.

Clayton: (disgusted now, and angry) But it's no good! Can't you see? Sure, its yours, but it's ugly. It's-it's like this hospital—so empty and unalive—so shamed! My God, it's sickening. But I can remember when I would've given anything to come back in here. They wouldn't let me, though—barred me from the place. Wouldn't let me come in the door—scared to come in the door! And now—why it could be *my own* now, but it's not the same. It's not right!

Roger: But I'm trying to tell you: it was a goof. She wouldn't ever play with *me,* so I had to do something. I didn't mean this, so I'm hiding with it. In my most favorite place. I didn't mean to, so it's all right, isn't it?

Clayton: (suddenly more receptive) I . . . sometimes we *do* do things we don't mean to—we make mistakes. You know. (growing intense; realizing Roger's potential as a listener) And then sometimes everybody gets mad at us for our mistakes.

Roger: (happy to be comparable) Yeah, like my mama and daddy! I heard 'em yelling for me, but I wouldn't come. I just grabbed him and ran here again.

Clayton: (impatient with the interruption; he ignores it) We start feeling bad about the mistake; sort of guilty, really. The thing maybe eats away at us—we start thinking about it all the time. (Roger nods as if ready to interrupt again, but Clayton notes it and starts in again louder) Sooo . . . we pretend we didn't make the mistake—so maybe we won't feel so bad and people won't be mad.

Roger: That's like me—bringing him here to hide it and keep it all to myself!

Clayton: (speaking earnestly to Roger, as if to warn him of his own experience) Roger, you know sometimes we *need* to cover up our mistakes—so that we can start fresh and clean over again, not feeling rotton and all.

Roger: Oh yes! Everything's gonna be okay. I mean, it was a goof—it's okay, isn't it?

Clayton: (very serious and almost talking only to himself) You know, I make a mistake once. A bad mistake.

Roger: When? Today?

Clayton: Oh no. Many years ago, when I *knew* this place . . . and it knew me. It's different now, you know? No, I guess you don't. Wait—have you ever been in a hospital before?

Roger: Once. When I had my tonsils out. I was just a baby, but I remember some.

Clayton (calming himself gradually) Then you can understand me. Do you know how a hospital is when it's alive? Do you remember how it was? I was an orderly. I knew this place when it lived and breathed. I knew its cleanliness. I knew its order and regulation when it was alive with human beings suffering. Some made better, some made worse. Some lives were ended, others were begun. Some it healed, some it killed. Those with possibilities, hope before them got another chance at life by some medicine, or an operation. Those that hadn't—well, their lives were ended. And that's how it went . . . only sometimes there were mistakes. And those with chances ahead didn't get to meet them. Sometimes *those* would die.

Roger: Was that the goof you made?

Clayton: (re-angered) Wha-what? Oh-ah-the goof I made . . . the mistake I made—you can't blame me for it! It wasn't all my fault. How could I know—? (he's really far away now; talking only to himself, growing wilder and wilder) It was always the same: births, deaths, suffering, healing—always the same parts of cycles happening. And I lived them all—until they asked me to leave. And I even told them—I told them it was a mistake! Still, it was ugly, they said. A horrible mistake. A serious . . . (pauses, as if being enlightened by this speech. Roger is only dumbfounded) Erase our mistakes—I've go to; Get it out of my mind, do away with it—I knew I had to! Start over again . . . (looks furtively about the room. Seizes kerosene can from near the fire, starts to slosh it; notices Roger)

Roger: (very confused) You gonna erase your goof, mister?

Clayton: Oh. God . . . Look Roger, I-uh . . . Hey! I'll bet we could start that fire we promised you a lot quicker if you went out and helped Jungle with the wood. Do you think?

Roger: (excited) Sure!

Clayton: (after a pause, dully) Yeah, get the fire going faster. (splashes kerosene over the room. During this final speech, his anger mounts almost to a peak before his exit) Jesus-God! It's not right. Yes, the cycle's still going on in here, but everything's ugly and nasty—not beautiful anymore. Nothing's left to hold sacred. No order, nothing clean and white—it's all so repulsive. (kicks chair or bed; slings empty can across room) Everything here's to curse!

It was my mistake. But don't make me pay! (almost yelling) I can't pay for something so filthy now! (pauses) It was good—it can't live now. Get rid of it (pulls matches from pocket madly, lights one) I knew I should. It's too horrible now. Not like it used to be—some lives were ended, some were begun . . . (he throws lighted match to the floor quite forcefully and dashes from the ward room)

CURTAIN

SARA BARFIELD

THE SOLITAIRE PLAYER

The four o'clock sun streamed in the floor-length window and fell on the snapping scissors in the hand of the girl. She sat cross-legged like an Indian with her body facing the glass panes. One long-fingered hand clutched the evening newspaper and the other manipulated the scissors, which were hastily slashing around a picture and article in the center of the front page. She flung the paper behind her with a quick movement and it crumpled noisily, but she remained unmoved, gazing at the shaking newsprint growing soggy with perspiration in her hand. Placing the scrap of paper on the tan carpet beside her she stretched out on her back and stared unblinking at the light fixture. With her bare feet propped on the window sill and her dark hair falling over her face as she turned her head to one side, she looked as if she was sliding away into a peaceful sleep.

She wore faded blue-jeans with holes in them from the summer they had been her brother's and he had worn them on his roofing job. Her mother knitted the mustard yellow sweater that now, stretched comfortably, she wore buttoned up the front to the neck. Strands of fine dark hair spread out on the carpet like yarn in separate coiling designs, covering half her face and deep blue eyes that were staring at the butterflies and bows on the wallpaper. She remained still, lying like a broken doll, until she heard a key springing the catch in the back door. Pressing one toe against the glass, cooled from the outside autumn air, she turned on her side, picked up the newsclipping, and looked out the window at the coming darkness.

Where the afternoon glow had been, a greyish-blue light fell. Electrical lights twinkled through the pine trees further down the hill. She kneeled in front of the glass looking from left to right at the barely distinguishable neon lights, the cross on top of St. Frances Hospital, the red Kroger Store sign, the expressway lights, and the blue-dotted airport runway lights. She could see tiny car headlights, springing from behind dark shapes, moving along, and then a second later blinking away. Still holding the paper she stood, drew the curtains and walked to the door. With the quick motion of a hand that has done the small task of flicking a switchplate a thousand times before, she snapped on the hall light without looking.

She was halfway up the attic stairs when she heard her mother's voice. She turned and sat down on the wooded steps, tucking the clipping in the pocket of her blue-jeans. Clasping her hands, elbows resting on knees, she waited for her mother to appear around the corner with the brown and white springer spaniel at her heels.

"Feed the dog? Hey dog—are you hungry?" she spoke as the dog happily sprang up the steps and sat down one step below her leaning his warm and heavy weight on her leg. She grabbed the soft fur at his throat and massaged his neck.

"What are you going to do in the attic?"

"Just put a newspaper clipping in one of my junk boxes."

"Okay, but be sure you feed him afterwards," her mother said turning to go.

"Hey Mama—are you sure he needs feeding?"

"Well, I haven't fed him all day."

"Yesterday he got fed four times. You know he goes wild whenever he hears the electric can opener—well, I think it's just a game. Everytime he hears it he barks and runs to the back door acting like he's starved. Four times he pretended like that yesterday—I fed him once, Papa fed his, Chip fed him, and the maid fed him. He's just faking! Aren't you dog?" She took his head between her hands and addressed the question to the animal's brown eyes, "Aren't you little man?"

"Well, I don't know. Did he eat it all?"

"He tried, but towards the end of the afternoon he just lay around in the carport like he didn't feel too good."

"Crazy dog! Do what you want to," her mother said laughing as she vanished around the corner.

She patted the dog hard on his muscled shoulder, talking to him, "All right fats—game's up. You're just playing 'fool the people', trying to see how many of us will feed you. Then you eat until you're sick and have to rest up in the fartherest spot in the carport away from the food. And then when you're hungry again you waddle over and eat some more. No wonder you're so fat. I'll be down in a minute", and she stepped up through the door into the attic.

At the top of the stairs stood the old bookcase that had been in her brother's room and then hers. Out of it spilled Nancy Drew books, Hardy Boy books, *Little Women, Junior Science,* a Monopoly game, Parchesi, and a box of Dominoes. Stepping past it she walked around her father's sea-chests and sat down in an over-stuffed armchair with a broad pink and white striped slipcover on it. The out-of-date dust ruffle was wrinkled and dirty. Sitting down in the chair she propped her feet on the photographic enlarger directly in front of her. She pulled the clipping out of her pocket and carefully unfolded it placing it on the candle-stand table on the right side of the chair. From this far end of the attic, she could see every box, trunk, and shelf. She glanced around the narrow space at the assortment of suitcases, ranging from old cloth brown and white baggage to the new luggage she had received for a graduation present; the trunks, her mother's trunks full of old bridesmaid dresses and her father's Navy trunks full of papers, books, and uniforms; the Christmas decorations in huge cardboard boxes with a label on each; the wooden barrel holding moldy baseball mitts, balls, bats and footballs; the punctured basketball on the floor; the small trunks with summer camp names pasted on their tops holding her brother's and her own drawings, grammar school tests, and report cards; her one separate trunk holding dance costumes in graduating sizes and all her dolls packed in tissue paper; and then her junk boxes. They were large square laundry boxes marked on the top with a magic-marker 1963-4, 1964-5, on up to 1969. The oldest boxes were in the neatest order. They held scrapbooks and letters postmarked Woodberry Forest, Virginia, sent to her every other day for three months. Her fingers nervously curled the edge of the newspaper. She lifted it to eye level, then sighed and dropped her hand over the arm of the chair, her gaze falling on her trunk, the one packed with dolls and costumes.

It's the same old thing. The same situation. Only this time I can't start the cycle over again—it's too late. It's just exactly like all my childhood games—only I can never start this one up again. I've always pretended—and it was fun. When I was tired of it I just quit and then when I was ready I'd return and pick it up again, like an unfinished solitaire game—the card player could leave when mystified and later pick up the cards again and nothing would be changed—the cards just wait for the player to pick them up again.

Leaning her head back against the chair she closed her eyes and remembered. She remembered that backyard of long ago. It was a treemendous lot, reaching halfway through the block. Chip built forts in the bamboo far away from the house, but she never liked to journey that far. Her special place had been under three small trees nearer the terrace. No grass grew there, the ground was smooth with cool greyish dirt. She remembered the hours that she had spent there raking leaves into outlines of houses and buildings, leaving spaces for doors and windows, until the finished job resembled a floor plan in *American Home.* Then Carrie, the maid, actually her companion, would come walking down the steps from the kitchen and stand on the terrace, drying her hands on her apron.

"What are you playing today Van?"

"Oh, I built a big house."

"Well, come on in, it's getting cold out here and it's just about time for your supper. Too bad the wind'll blow all that away tonight."

"No, it doesn't matter. I'm tired of it anyway," she said beginning to knock down the walls with her foot, scattering the leaves everywhere. She stooped and picked up the plastic doll beds and chairs that had been placed throughout the house plan. "I'll build a better one tomorrow."

I've always been that way. I could pretend and have a marvelous time, then when I became disillusioned with play, turn my train of thought from one thing to another, like someone changes the television station. It's good to be able to tune out unpleasantness in that way, but I not only turned away from unpleasantness but also happy, good things when something else caught my thoughts.

"You didn't even look back," her mother said after she had returned from a month of camp in the North Carolina mountains, "You just got out of the car and walked away."

And she thinking, "How awful—I did do that—and without even knowing it."

"You were only ten and going away for the first time. Yet you didn't even look back. Papa and I were very upset."

"Oh Mama—I didn't mean to. I guess I wasn't thinking—like I said I had to pass my swimming test."

She leaned over and flipped off the top of one of the boxes. Lifting out a bulging scrapbook, she opened the leather-bound cover and laughed out loud at the letters of her name fancily scrawled across the front page in lavender paint. Turning page after page, past squashed corsages that made huge lumps in the surrounding sheets of paper, social club invitations, ticket stubs, airplane occupied signs, she stopped at the page with a color snapshot of a boy and girl. They sat in the grass on the sloping hill in the backyard, grinning at the camera, dressed in shorts with shirt-tails out, a brown and white puppy sitting between them.

That picture had been taken five years ago, when she was fifteen just after her sophomore year in high school. She remembered that summer and the two that followed, when they had been separated for only short periods of time. Every day they went to the river and skied, then they would sit in her back yard with the puppy, her father reading the newspaper, her mother watering the yard, Chip in his National Guard uniform showing Ted his new fishing boat motor or pictures of the dunebuggy that he was building in the back of the Triple A Auto Parts Shop. If Ted didn't have any money for a movie, they watched the television and drank beer with her family. Chip, Ted, and she became a tight threesome. She remembered the Sunday they drove into Alabama and bought the old black convertible Volkswagen that was now becoming the dunebuggy. It was battered and worn, the doors barely shutting, with lumps and dents, the fenders crooked and smashed. It only cost one hundred and fifty dollars. She remembered laughing as she drove her brother's car back across the river following him in the open Volkswagen, Ted beside her. It was hard to keep up with the black moving junk-metal her brother maneuvered at its top speed along the empty back Alabama roads. Then there were the summer parties at the country pool. Everyone would go out to the elegant swimming pool and summer house made of field stone in the towering pines. Sam, (it was his Grandmother's estate), would provide the stereo and the couples would arrive about dark with the stryofoam coolers full of beer. It was one night at Sam's that she began to realize that the game was slowing down. Maybe she really had liked him, or maybe it was all pretend, she could not tell. She did know that that night when, with a little too much beer in his stomach, he dived in the pool and lost both contacts, she began to criticize him. From then on she was disillusioned with everything he did. She disliked hearing him drum his fingers on the dashboard and she disliked the way he nervously and near-sightedly looked at her. So she told him good-bye.

"How could you do that? How after three years could you just say so-long to someone like that?" the blonde girl sitting on the built-in college dormitory bed questioned, dragging on her slim cigarette and closing one eye to keep out the smoke.

"I don't know. I just got tired of him."

"I bet you could get him back if you just said the word. Just pick up the pieces. You think so too, don't you?"

"How did she know?" she thought. "Does it show in everything I do? It's not self confidence or arrogance, it's just the same game again. I think I'm that solitaire player and that I can quit and then pick up the cards again, ready to play, anytime I want to."

Picking up the newspaper clipping that had fallen to the planked floor and read it again. Although it was one of many readings, she suddenly looked up as if she had just understood it for the first time. The leaf houses, Ted and those summers, the dormitory conversation, all flashed through her mind—especially the girl's words—"You think so too."

Yeh—I think so too. I'm the solitaire player, only this time when I wasn't looking, someone snatched the unplayed cards away, and I won't ever get them back. Funny that I only knew him briefly, just dated him two week-ends in my sophomore year of college, yet I've been worrying about this ever since I heard he died. I guess the reason it's so eerie to me is that I thought about him that day for the first time in about four months. It was even that same Sunday that he died, and I told my roommate how I'd really liked Chapel Hill last fall, the football game, his sister, him. Maybe I was starting to pick up the unfinished solitaire game, maybe I was ready to play again, but when I looked the cards were gone. That's what worries me so—the cards will probably vanish time and time again, if I don't change. And I, like the solitaire player without any cards, will be lost.

"Van—are you going to feed the dog?"

"I'm coming Mama," she said tossing the newspaper clipping into the box marked 1969. She hurried down the steps touching the wall with one out-stretched hand to help keep her balance. The springer spaniel anxiously waited at the bottom of the stairs, quivering and pouncing from side to side, his toe nails catching in the synthetic carpet and making little popping noises.

"O.K. dog—are you playing again too?"

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